# TWO NEW SERIALS BEGIN IN THIS ISSUE

# THE ARGOSY FOR FEBRUARY

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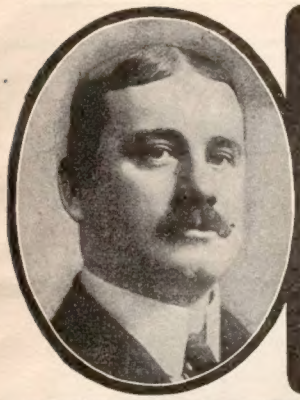

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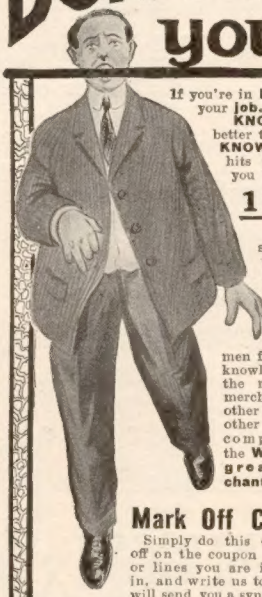

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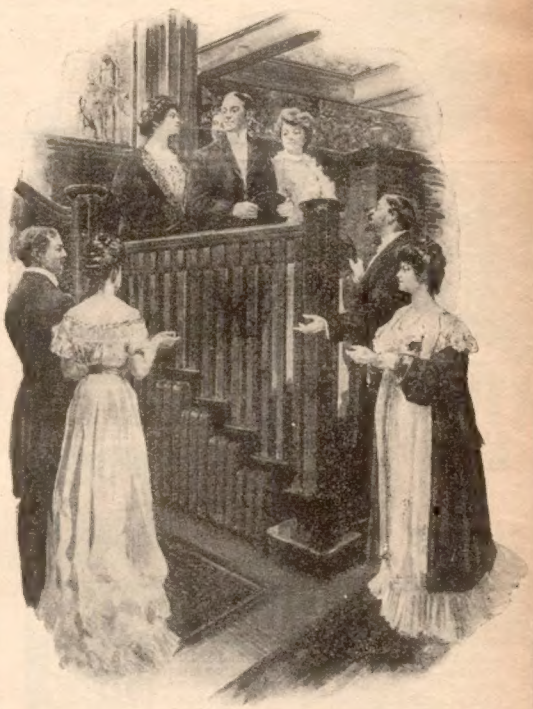

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# THE ARGOSY

Vol. LIX FEBRUARY, 1909. No. 3

# HOW COULD IT BE?

By BERTRAM LEBHAR,

Author of "The Jailbird," "When a Man's Hungry," "The Isle of Mysteries," etc.

Why a member of New York's traffic squad believed what seemed to be suicide was murder.

**(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.)**

## CHAPTER I.

### RIGHT ON THE JOB.

"SHOE-POLISH is an excellent thing in its way, but to have one's skin coated with it is a case of a good thing in the wrong place." Thus mused Fred Kinley, with a sigh.

He was in a position to speak with authority on the subject, for his body was caked with Burnby's Best Blacking, which, according to the manufacturer, was guaranteed to impart a brilliant polish that would last for days. And Kinley wasn't a college student undergoing a hazing, either.

It had been bad enough when the polish was first administered in its semi-liquid form, but since then it had dried and was becoming more and more uncomfortable every minute.

Outwardly there didn't appear to be anything wrong with Kinley. He was faultlessly attired in a resplendent uniform of blue cloth and yellow braid—the uniform of a traffic-squad policeman—which was exceedingly becoming to him.

As he sat astride his fine chestnut steed, regulating with an imperious hand the tide of travel on Fifth Avenue, many passers-by glanced at him in admiration.

"What a fine-looking policeman!" they remarked. "He's a credit to the city. See how straight he sits in the saddle."

If they had guessed aught of the shoe-polish beneath the uniform, doubtless their admiration would have been mingled with sympathy. But of course they did not know.

Philosophers tell us that beneath fine clothes and gay appearances there is often an ache and a smart; and so it was now with Fred Kinley.

Doubtless the reader is wondering how the young man's skin happened to be coated with blacking. Therefore be it explained that Officer Kinley was a newcomer on the force. It was his first day on the job, and the men of his platoon had mercilessly put him through a rigorous initiation ceremony.

First they had blindfolded him and tied his hands behind his back. Then they had forced him to kneel upon a night-stick for fifteen minutes. To kneel upon the rounded surface of a policeman's locust baton may not sound like a very painful proposition. Let those who think it easy try it for five minutes. By the end of that time they will have reached the conclusion that the tortures of the Spanish Inquisition were mild in comparison.

Kinley's knees ached so that he almost fainted with pain when the fifteen minutes were up.

Then his relentless tormentors assisted him to his feet. Their leader, a big, freckle-faced fellow, made a speech.

He informed Kinley that now, being a full-fledged member of the New York

police force, he must always do his duty and endeavor to be a first-class policeman. He added that in order to help him to be a good *"polishman,"* they would proceed to administer the polish.

Then they very considerately gave Kinley the choice of taking the polish internally or externally.

The unfortunate young man, still blindfolded, could not imagine what was in store for him; but he decided that, whatever the polish was, he preferred it outside his system rather than inside.

His comrades thereupon fell upon him with great glee, and, having previously stripped him of all his clothing, proceeded to daub him from head to foot with Burnby's Best, which they administered with none too gentle touches and by means of stiff scrubbing-brushes, borrowed for the occasion from the police stables and generally used for scrubbing down horses.

Then they removed the bandage from his eyes, helped him to get into his clothes, shook hands with him, and told him that he was now duly initiated and a full-fledged member of the force.

As they helped him into his clothes, without taking the trouble first to wash off the blacking, Kinley made no protest, but grinned good-naturedly, being under the impression that it would be an easy matter for him to undress again, jump into a hot bath, and remove the offensive stuff from his skin before it dried.

But, to his dismay, before he could carry out his intention the bell for roll-call sounded. He barely had time to rush to the sink and wash the shoe-polish from his face and hands. Then he had to go down-stairs, answer to his name, and go out immediately on post, with never a chance of removing the blacking from the rest of his body until his day's work was ended.

Kinley bore it all with perfect good nature. It was not the first time that he had been the victim of a hazing. He had once nearly lost his life at a fraternity initiation when he was at college.

For Kinley was a college graduate. He was also a scion of one of the wealthiest and most blue-blooded families of Kentucky.

His folks at home had no idea that he was wearing the uniform of a New York policeman. If they had known it, doubtless they would have been horrified, for they had hoped to see him occupy a much more exalted position in life.

The young man had quarreled with his family three years previously, and had come to New York to earn his own living. After trying his hand at several things, he had impulsively decided to join the New York police force. It was not difficult for a young man of his splendid physique and education to pass the necessary examinations, and he soon got his appointment.

It was his great ambition to be assigned to the detective bureau, for he greatly prided himself upon his ability in this direction. In fact, at college they had called him "Old Sleuth Kinley," because he had once solved the mystery of some dormitory robberies after the local police had confessed themselves completely baffled.

The fame of this achievement, however, apparently had not reached the ears of the New York police commissioner, for, upon joining the force, Kinley's desire to be assigned to detective-work was not gratified.

There happened to be several vacancies in the mounted squad just then, and, as Kinley could ride like an Arab, he was sent to the traffic-squad.

His first four hours of duty as a "mounted cop" were not very exciting. He was stationed at Thirty-Fourth Street and Fifth Avenue, and all he had to do was alternately to halt the avenue and the cross-street traffic, so that each in turn had the "right of way."

He was getting heartily tired of this monotonous occupation. He yearned to give his horse full rein and gallop off at breakneck speed. Then, too, the dried shoe-polish on his skin was annoying him exceedingly.

He was almost beginning to feel sorry that he had joined the police force, when suddenly something occurred to break the monotony.

There were cries of alarm from pedestrians on the sidewalks, and shouts of warning and fear from drivers and coachmen on the roadway.

Everybody seemed to be trying to get out of the way of something. The drivers of carriages reined in their

horses and huddled their vehicles as close to the curb as they could get. Chauffeurs pursued the same tactics with their automobiles.

Nervous women on the sidewalks took refuge in the doorways of stores. From far up the avenue came the oft-repeated shout of "Stop 'em! Stop 'em!"

Down the avenue, with the speed of an express-train, came the cause of all this consternation—two panic-stricken, foam-bedecked milk-white horses, dragging a closed brougham which swayed like a tree in a storm.

There was no driver on the box. He had been thrown from his seat five blocks farther up; but screams of fear which came from inside the brougham proclaimed the fact that the vehicle was occupied.

Kinley's horse pricked up her ears and began to tug at her reins. She knew as well as her master what was to be done, for police-horses are the most intelligent of beasts.

Kinley was too expert a horseman to attempt to bar the path of that flying team. To the astonishment and indignation of the spectators, he reined in his prancing horse and allowed the runaways to pass him.

The murmurs of disapproval, however, quickly changed to a shout of applause as the mounted policeman bent low over his horse's neck, gave her full rein, and dashed off in pursuit.

In the space of half a block he was alongside the flying team. Leaning far over in his saddle, he seized the bridle of the nigh horse, and, availing himself of a dexterous trick he had learned on his father's stock-farm down in old Kentucky, managed to bring the runaways to a stop within another half block—a creditable performance, considering the rate at which they were going.

As the beasts stood there, their broad white chests quivering, their nostrils dilating, the door of the brougham opened and there stepped hurriedly therefrom a tall, distinguished-looking, gray-haired man, and a young girl.

It needed only one glance at the latter for Kinley to decide that she was the most beautiful girl he had ever seen in his life, despite the fact that her face was deathly pale.

"Thank you, officer," said the man. "That was well done—very well done. You undoubtedly saved our lives, for if we had run into anything at the rate we were going, I hate to think what would have happened. Where is Sandy, our coachman? Is he hurt very badly? Poor fellow, he was thrown from his seat when the foolish beasts bolted. I guess he must have fared pretty badly."

But, strange to say, Sandy, as it turned out, was scarcely hurt at all. Despite his bad fall, he had escaped with a few bruises, and while they were talking he came limping up and looked at his employer so sheepishly that the girl burst out laughing.

There was something so infectious about her mirth that Kinley, who had dismounted and was holding his horse by the bridle, laughed too. The old gentleman smiled, and even Sandy, conscious of the fact that the laugh was on him, and relieved to see that his employer took the accident so lightly, scratched his red head and grinned.

"What is your name, officer?" demanded the gray-haired man.

"Kinley—Fred Kinley," answered the policeman, flushing somewhat as he noticed that the girl was looking at him with frank admiration in her eyes.

"Well, Officer Kinley, I sha'n't forget your good work. I intend to write to your commissioner about it. You are a brave young man, sir."

Kinley protested modestly. "I only did my duty, sir. That's what we're here for, you know—to stop runaways and regulate traffic. By the way, will you be kind enough to let me have your name, sir? I have to make a report of the incident, you know."

"My name is Wellers—Colonel Maxim Wellers, of 154 Fifth Avenue."

"And the young lady's name, please?" demanded the policeman, inwardly rejoicing at the fact that it was in the line of his duties to ask the question.

"My niece, Miss Genevieve Graham, of the same address," said the colonel.

Kinley wrote down the names carefully. After thanking him again, the colonel and his niece reentered the brougham. Sandy jumped upon the box, and they drove off.

Still holding his horse by the bridle,

Fred Kinley stood there in a day-dream for at least five minutes, unmindful of the admiring crowd which had gathered around him.

"What a peach of a girl!" he mused. "What glorious eyes! What a sweet voice! I'd give a great deal to be on her visiting-list. If I were Fred Kinley of the old days, and not just a plain, ordinary, common cop, I believe I should have enough nerve to pay the colonel a visit.

"But I guess they're too swell to receive a policeman at their house. If I called there, they'd probably send me in the kitchen to be entertained by the cook. Confound this uniform, anyway! I was a fool to join the force."

As he scowled at the asphalt pavement his gaze fell upon a little glittering object lying in the roadway. He stooped and picked it up. It was a little round gold locket with a small diamond in the center. Kinley remembered that he had seen it dangling from a thin gold chain around the girl's neck.

"It's hers," he muttered. "It must have come unfastened as she stood here. Of course, it's up to me to return it to its rightful owner. Thank goodness, this gives me an excuse to call at the house."

And for the rest of the day Kinley forgot all about the shoe-polish which caked his skin.

## CHAPTER II.

### TWO OPINIONS OF A FACE.

When Kinley went to the station-house that night he wrote out a brief formal report of the runaway incident, as the regulations required, and handed it to the sergeant behind the desk.

"That's good work, my boy," said the latter, as he glanced at the report. "Keep this sort of thing up, and you'll make a good cop. You're fortunate to have had a chance to get in the good graces of Colonel Maxim Wellers. I suppose you know who he is, eh?"

"No, I don't know very much about him," Kinley admitted.

"Well, he's a very wealthy man. He lives with his niece and a bunch of servants at 154 Fifth Avenue. It's a fine house and magnificently fitted. The furniture and the oil-paintings must be worth a million dollars, I guess. I've been inside. When I was a patrolman I used to have that post, and I was friendly with the cook."

"Do you know anything about the girl—his niece, Miss Graham, I mean?" inquired Kinley eagerly.

"I don't know much about her, except that she's lived with the colonel since she was a little bit of a girl. Her parents are dead, I believe. I understand she's to inherit her uncle's millions when he dies.

"She's a peacherino, isn't she? Them there heiresses are generally as homely as sin. The fellers what marry them for their money generally come pretty near earning it. But the chap that succeeds in winning Colonel Wellers's pretty niece will be a lucky man. He'll have a beauty and a fortune together."

"I suppose she has many suitors," remarked Kinley rather glumly.

"Oh, yes. There's been lots of fellers after her ever since she was sixteen years old. An English duke made desperate efforts to win her a few years ago. She threw him down cold, and he threatened to blow his brains out. I guess when he came to look for 'em, though, he found he didn't have any brains to blow out, for he's still alive."

Kinley left the station-house in a somewhat gloomy frame of mind. He went to his boarding-house, doffed his uniform, removed the shoe-polish by means of a hot bath, and donned his best suit.

Then he put the little gold locket in his pocket, and went out to restore it to its rightful owner.

On his way to 154 Fifth Avenue, something prompted him to take out the little trinket and examine it carefully.

"It opens," he mused. "Probably there's a picture inside. I wonder whose picture it is. It isn't a very gentlemanly thing to do, I suppose, but nevertheless I think I'll open it."

He pressed a little spring, the two halves of the locket separated, and Kinley found himself gazing at the photograph of a man's face.

It was an extraordinary face. It was impossible to tell from it whether its owner was young or past middle age.

There was a suggestion of youth about the features, and then, again, there was an equally strong suggestion of maturity.

The original was undoubtedly a foreigner. He was strikingly handsome, and yet there was something about his features which repelled and filled one with a sense of mistrust.

Kinley gazed upon the photograph for a full five minutes—as a man gazes upon the face of a rival.

"Whoever you are," he muttered, addressing the picture, "you're a lucky chap to be thus honored; and I heartily wish I could change places with you. You don't look as if you deserve it, either, for, without any prejudice, I think you've got the face of a villain."

Almost viciously he snapped the locket closed and restored it to his vest-pocket.

Fifteen minutes later he was ringing the front-door bell of Colonel Wellers's Fifth Avenue residence.

"Is Miss Graham at home?" he asked the flunky who answered his ring.

"I don't know, sir. If you'll kindly step inside I'll find out. Will you let me have your card, please?"

Kinley's visiting-cards bore no mention of the fact that he was connected with the police department. They had been printed months before he had conceived the idea of joining the force. They read simply:

MR. FRED KINLEY.

He hesitated a minute, undetermined as to whether or not he should write on the card a brief message stating who he was and the object of his present visit.

But he said to himself grimly: "No. I'll not write a word. I'll send up the card just as it is. I'll see if she remembers my name."

He handed the slip of pasteboard to the flunky, and a few minutes afterward Miss Genevieve Graham came tripping into the reception-room.

"How do you do?" she said sweetly. "You are the officer who saved our lives to-day, are you not? I recognized your name as soon as James brought your card to me."

A thrill of joy shot through Kinley. She *had* thought enough of him to remember his name. It seemed almost too good to be true.

But a second later he thought of the fellow in the locket, and his joy vanished.

"I am so glad you have come," continued Miss Graham. "I am afraid that we did not thank you sufficiently for your brave act this afternoon. I want to tell you now how very much my uncle and I appreciate your heroic deed."

Kinley felt himself blushing to the roots of his hair.

"It was nothing, Miss Graham," he protested. "It is part of our duty to stop runaways. We are expected to do it. There isn't a man on the traffic-squad who wouldn't have stopped your team if he had been there in my place."

"You are very modest, Mr. Kinley," said the girl. "You may make light of the adventure, but I assure you it was a mighty big thing in my eyes.

"When our foolish horses took fright at a passing automobile and started to bolt, and the brougham began to sway, I thought for sure that my uncle and I were going to be killed. I was so frightened I could not help screaming, and when I saw you come dashing past on your horse, and a few seconds later realized that ours were under control, I was so very glad I could have cried with joy."

Again Kinley's heart beat with exultation; but he told himself that he was a fool to be thus affected by this frank speech.

"I am glad to have had the privilege of serving you," he said. "I assure you, however, Miss Graham, that I did not come here with the object of receiving your thanks. Perhaps I had better explain at once the purpose of my call.

"After you went away this afternoon I found something which I believe belongs to you. I have come here to return it."

He held out the little gold locket, and the girl received it with joyful eagerness.

"Oh, thank you! Yes, the locket does belong to me. It must have slipped off the chain. It is very good of you to return it so promptly. I had not noticed its disappearance, but it would have grieved me very much if I had lost it.

It contains the photograph of some one—some one who is very dear to me."

She said the last words in a voice so low that it was almost a whisper—a whisper full of reverence and affection. There was an expression in her eyes which made Kinley wish more than ever that he had been the original of that picture.

There was no doubt whatever that that lucky fellow was as securely installed in her heart as he was in the little locket she now held in her hand.

Kinley's heart immediately became as heavy as lead.

Feeling that it was "up to him" to say something, however, he was just about to remark that he was glad to have found the locket since she valued it so highly, when a heavy step was heard outside the door and Colonel Maxim Wellers entered the room.

At sight of him, the girl cried out joyfully: "Oh, uncle, I am glad you have come down. Of course, you recognize this gentleman. It is the brave policeman who saved our lives this afternoon. Now he has done me another great service. He has found this locket and restored it to me. I don't think I shall ever be out of his debt."

The colonel greeted Kinley with a gracious nod.

"I am pleased to see you, young man," he said. "I am glad you have come here, because, as a matter of fact, I intended to send for you, anyway. I want to talk with you concerning a matter of business. Come up-stairs with me to the library, please. My niece will excuse us."

Wondering greatly as to what this matter of business could be, Kinley followed the colonel up-stairs. His wonder increased as, upon entering the library, the colonel closed the door and turned the key in the lock.

This done, the millionaire drew two chairs very close together, and, sinking into one, motioned to the young policeman to occupy the other.

Kinley observed that the expression on the colonel's face was very serious. He had a worried look in his eyes, and his face was pale.

"Young man," he began in a low voice, "how would you like to leave the police force and enter my service?"

The abruptness of this proposal caused Kinley to gasp with surprise. He was too greatly staggered to make any reply to the question.

"As a patrolman," went on the colonel, "you can't be receiving more than twenty-five dollars a week. I will pay you seventy dollars a week. How does that strike you?"

"But in what capacity do you desire to employ me, sir?" Kinley blurted out.

"As my personal body-guard," replied the colonel in a whisper.

Kinley shook his head.

"I beg your pardon, Colonel Wellers. I really couldn't accept any such offer. If I am not mistaken, you are creating this sinecure for me as a reward for the slight service I was able to render you and your niece this afternoon. I have already explained to you that I did nothing more than my duty and cannot accept any reward for it."

The colonel silenced him by an imperious wave of the hand.

"You are mistaken, young man," he said. "I am not offering you a sinecure. Neither am I creating a job for you as a reward for stopping our runaway carriage. That act, though, demonstrated the fact that you have courage, and I want a courageous young man. In addition, you seem to have intelligence and much more breeding than one perhaps might expect to find in a New York policeman.

"I need such a man in my service. I must have a personal body-guard to be at my side at all times. You strike me as being an ideal man for the job. Will you take it?"

Kinley hesitated. He didn't care so much about the seventy dollars a week; but there was another reason which made the offer sound tempting. As the colonel's body-guard, he would undoubtedly see a whole lot of the colonel's beautiful niece. That consideration caused him to hesitate.

The colonel waited for a few minutes. Then he spoke again.

"Well," he demanded eagerly, "what do you think of it? Will you accept my offer?"

The young man looked him squarely in the eyes.

"I will be frank with you, sir," he said. "I hope you will pardon me for saying

so; but, despite your denial, I can't dismiss from my mind the idea that you are offering me this job solely as a reward for what I did this afternoon. I will take the job on one condition."

"And what is that?"

"That you first prove to me that you really need a body-guard. If you need me, I shall be glad to enter your employ. If you have no real need for me, I cannot bring myself to accept—charity."

"Very good," said the millionaire. "Your attitude does you credit, young man. I don't think I shall have any difficulty in convincing you that your services are in demand. Of course, what I am going to tell you now is imparted in strictest confidence. You must never breathe a word of it to anybody. If I am any judge of faces, I can rely upon your discretion and sense of honor."

Kinley bowed.

"Let me tell you, then," went on the colonel, sinking his voice to a whisper, "that I am in great danger. My life is threatened. I have a deadly enemy, who has sworn to kill me. Some day, I fear, despite all my precautions, he will succeed. That is why I need a body-guard."

There was no mistaking the sincerity of the words or the hunted, half-fearful look in the steel-gray eyes.

Kinley jumped to his feet and held out his hand.

"Very good, sir," he said. "You have told me enough. I accept your offer."

"I am glad to hear you say so," said the gray-haired millionaire, shaking him warmly by the hand. "I feel that I can trust you, and that with you as my body-guard I shall be comparatively safe. Can you start in right away?"

"I'm afraid not. I must resign from the police department first. As it happens, I've only just joined it. I don't want to be dishonorably dismissed."

"Well, come as soon as possible, for every hour is fraught with danger to me. There is no telling when that blood-thirsty scoundrel will get to me. By the way, I might as well show you what he looks like. I have his picture here."

He went to a small safe, and, turning the combination, drew therefrom a cabinet-sized photograph.

"Here he is," he whispered fearfully. "Take a good look at those features, young man. Impress them indelibly upon your memory. It is the face of the wickedest and cruelest man in the world."

Kinley glanced at the photograph the millionaire held out to him, and as his gaze fell upon the picture he gave vent to a gasp of amazement.

For he recognized that face instantly. It was an enlarged photograph of the face in Genevieve Graham's locket.

The girl had said that it was the picture of some one very dear to her. The colonel had just said that it was the picture of the wickedest and cruelest man in the world.

Here was an extraordinary state of affairs.

Kinley's first impulse was to put his surprise into words; but something prompted him to keep silent.

Doubtless the colonel did not know of the picture in his niece's locket. And to mention it would not be quite fair to the girl.

## CHAPTER III.

### A TRAGEDY.

"PERHAPS, later on, when we become more intimately acquainted," the colonel continued, "I may tell you more concerning this man and the reason why he has determined to bring about my death. For the present, you will pardon me, I hope, for not going into details.

"It is enough for you to know that the original of that photograph will surely murder me if he gets a chance. As my personal body-guard, it will be up to you to see that he never does get a chance. You will have to keep your eyes open and your wits about you all the time, for he is a cunning villain, and it is impossible to tell what methods he will adopt in order to effect his dastardly purpose.

"You have expressed an opinion that your job will be something of a sinecure. You are very much mistaken, young man. You will find it, I fear, very exacting work.

"You will have to be at my beck and call at all times. When I go out, you

must always accompany me, and keep close watch over me. Even when I am at home here, your vigilance must not be relaxed, for I feel that even these walls do not render me safe from that blood-thirsty villain's vengeance."

"And does your niece, Miss Graham, know that this man is your enemy, and that he is determined to kill you?" Kinley ventured to inquire.

The millionaire's voice sank to a whisper.

"Fortunately, my niece knows nothing about it," he answered. "She has never seen that picture, and she doesn't know that there is such a man in existence. I have not entrusted her with my secret. She must not know it. It would alarm her beyond measure, for she is very greatly attached to me."

This reply staggered Kinley. Apparently, the colonel was laboring under a sad misapprehension. His niece *did* know of the existence of the original of that photograph. Moreover, she not only knew of his existence, but she held him in the highest regard.

She had told Kinley so herself. There could be no doubt that the picture the colonel had shown him was the picture of the same face that the girl's locket contained. Kinley was positive of that fact.

Here was surely a great mystery. How had this foreign-looking man, who so thirsted for the colonel's life, managed to win the affections of the colonel's niece?

Probably it was a clandestine affair, and, doubtless, there was treachery at the bottom of it. Kinley felt certain that the fellow had cunningly won his way into the girl's heart, with the sinister motive of wreaking vengeance upon her uncle.

Under the circumstances, he asked himself, was it not his duty to tell the millionaire about the picture in the locket, and thereby put him on his guard?

But somehow it went against his grain to do this. He reflected that, after all, he had obtained his information surreptitiously. If he had not taken the unauthorized liberty of opening that locket and examining its contents in the first place, he would not now know whose picture the locket contained.

Under the circumstances, he felt in honor bound not to betray the girl's secret.

He made up his mind, however, that, later on, he would manage to glean from the girl some information as to the identity of the man in the locket, and of her relations with him.

Doubtless, she was in complete ignorance of the fellow's animosity toward her uncle. She didn't seem like the kind of girl who, with open eyes, would be apt to fall in love with the deadly enemy of her nearest of kin.

Perhaps, a little later, he could manage discreetly to warn the girl of the fellow's sinister motives without betraying the colonel's secret.

Having arrived at this conclusion, Kinley breathed easier. The colonel's next utterance was startling.

"I'll tell you something regarding our little adventure this afternoon," he said. "The incident of the runaway, I mean. I suppose you think that it was really an accident, eh?"

"Why, of course," replied Kinley. "Can there be any doubt of it, sir? I understand that your horses took fright at a passing automobile and bolted."

The millionaire smiled—a ghastly smile.

"Young man," he whispered, "I have had those horses for five years. They are thoroughbreds, and worth a small fortune. They have won blue ribbons at the horse show three times. They are thoroughly city-broken, and are quite used to automobiles. They have never been known to bolt before. Therefore, I don't think it at all likely that a passing automobile was the cause of their panic this afternoon."

"What, then?" inquired the amazed policeman.

"I think it extremely probable that those beasts bolted because somebody wilfully frightened them. I think it was done with the deliberate intention of killing or injuring myself and my niece."

"Pooh!" exclaimed Kinley. "That sounds like a wild theory, my dear sir. Your coachman was on the box all the time. How could anybody deliberately have scared your horses, without his knowledge?"

The old man shook his head and gave vent to a short, nervous laugh.

"I don't know how it was done, my boy; but it is my firm belief that the bolting of my team was due to the work of my enemy or one of his agents."

"And if you'll pardon my saying so, it is my firm belief that you are mistaken, sir, in this instance. You must not allow your nerves to get the best of you, colonel. However, to make sure, suppose we interview your coachman. If there are any grounds for your suspicion, perhaps he can help us by giving us the full details of the runaway."

"That's a good idea," the millionaire agreed. "You must be very guarded in your questions, however. I don't want Sandy or the other servants to gather the slightest hint as to my secret."

"Never fear, sir. I'll be very discreet. I'll get what we want out of Sandy without his suspecting anything."

"Very good," said the colonel; and after unlocking the library-door, he rang a bell, which brought the butler into the room.

"Tell Sandy to come here immediately," the millionaire ordered, and a few minutes later the red-haired coachman stood in his master's presence.

The fellow glanced at Kinley, but did not appear to recognize him out of his uniform.

"Sandy," began the colonel, "I have been telling this gentleman about the runaway this afternoon. We would like to hear the details from you."

"Certainly, sir. I hope you dinna blame me for the occurrence, sir. It was na fault of mine. I did the best I could, sir; but the puir beasts seemed to be possessed, they was that skeert."

"What scared them, my man?" inquired Kinley.

"One of them automobiles, it must ha' been, sir, unless it was the devil himself. We was going slowly down the avenoo, almost at a walk, when a big red automobile came along in the other direction. As it passed us the beasts suddenly became daft and broke away. I was thrown from my seat. That is all I know, sir."

"Are you sure it was the motor-car which scared them?" inquired Kinley.

"Aweel, if it wasn't that, sir, it must ha' been the deevil hisself."

"Was there anybody near the horses at the time they bolted?" asked Kinley with elaborate carelessness. "Did anybody happen to cross the street in front of them just then, I mean?"

"When I come to think of it, sir, there was a man ran out in front of the beasts, from the sidewalk, just as the auto came along."

"Ha! And did this man do anything to the horses? Did he touch them, my man?"

"Na. He dinna touch them, or I would ha' given him the whip. He just happened to be crossing the street at the time, that's all. Nay. I am sure he dinna touch the beasts. All he did was to wave his hand at them as he passed; but that couldn't have scared them—they was too well bred for that."

"Ha! He was quite near to them, and he waved his hand toward them, eh, and then ran across to the other side of the street? By the way, Sandy, can you tell us what this fellow looked like?"

"I didn't remark him very well, sir, except to note that he had red hair—as red as meen."

"Very good, Sandy. That will be all," said Kinley. "Of course, you are quite right in saying that it was the automobile which scared your team. It couldn't have been anything else. You can go now."

The coachman looked interrogatingly at his master, who nodded his acquiescence in this order.

After Sandy had left, the colonel closed the door and again turned the key in the lock.

"Well," he inquired eagerly, "what do you think now, young man?"

"I think that your suspicions may be well founded, colonel," answered Kinley. "From the coachman's story, it looks as if that fellow may have thrown pepper or snuff at the beasts, and thus caused them to bolt. But it couldn't have been your enemy who did it. He hasn't red hair, has he?"

"No. But he may have worn a wig, or it may have been some other rogue hired by him. I feel thoroughly convinced now that it was an attempt to murder me. You can see, from this occurrence, how closely you will have to be on your guard against this desperate wretch."

"I promise you that I shall be so, sir," answered Kinley. "You will have no cause to complain of my lack of vigilance."

With that, the two men shook hands and parted company.

Kinley never again saw Colonel Wellers alive. The next day he was found dead in his bed, with a dagger in his heart, his right hand clasping the hilt.

## CHAPTER IV.

### WAS IT SUICIDE?

"SERGEANT," remarked Kinley, as he entered the station-house the morning following his interview with Colonel Wellers, "I would like to ask you a question."

"Fire away, son," replied the grizzled police official behind the desk.

"What is the correct course of procedure to follow when one wishes to resign from the police department?"

"Well, the correct thing to do is to put your resignation in writing and send it to the police commissioner. But surely you ain't thinking of resigning?"

Kinley nodded, somewhat shamefacedly.

"Well, I'll be—jiggered! Why, you ain't been in the department more than a day. Yesterday was your first tour of duty. And you want to get out already, eh? What's eating you, anyway?"

"I've had an offer of a good job in private life, and I want to take it."

The sergeant shook his head disapprovingly.

"Well, of course you know your own business best, my boy; but I should advise you to give the matter a little more thought before you hand in your resignation. Remember, once you're out, you're out for good. You can't get back again. You strike me as being a nice, clean, intelligent chap, such as is bound to rise in the department. Why not think it over for a couple of days, instead of doing anything hasty?"

But, despite this well-meant advice, Kinley wrote out his resignation at once, and mailed it to the commissioner as soon as he left the station-house to go on post.

He was a little bit reluctant to leave the police department, and thereby forego the chance of some day becoming attached to the detective bureau, but Colonel Wellers's offer was really too alluring to refuse.

In addition to bringing him in close proximity to the colonel's beautiful niece, the job also promised to be full of thrills and excitement.

To thwart the efforts of a cunning scoundrel bent upon assassination, would be interesting work. Then, too, there was a mystery to solve—the mystery of this handsome foreigner, who was hated and feared by the uncle and, at the same time, apparently, loved and trusted by the niece.

It was the kind of mystery which irresistibly appealed to him.

As he sat on his horse at Fifth Avenue and Thirty-Fourth Street, regulating traffic, as he had done on the preceding day, he said to himself:

"I'll make this foreign fellow behave. I'll teach him that he can't work any of his bloodthirsty schemes of vengeance when I'm around. I'll set a trap for him, and see if I can't force him prematurely to show his hand and fall within the clutches of the law before he can carry out his intention to murder the colonel. I rather think that before I've been on the job very long, this would-be assassin will be safely locked in a prison cell. The colonel will breathe easier, and Miss Graham will have her eyes opened at last, and will take his photograph out of the locket and throw it into the fire."

There was something so pleasing about this prospect that he chuckled with anticipatory delight.

At eleven o'clock that morning a mounted roundsman rode up to him.

"Your name is Kinley, I believe," he said. "Well, you're to leave this post and go down-town at once and report to the sixth precinct. There's some sort of a labor parade going on down there, and they want a couple of mounted men as an escort. There'll be a bicycle cop here in a few minutes to relieve you. You can go right ahead. I'll take care of this corner until your relief arrives."

Kinley saluted and urged his horse to a gallop.

He rode down Fifth Avenue, and as he neared the residence of Colonel Wellers he reined in his mount and passed the house very slowly, looking wistfully at the big front door and secretly hoping that he would be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of Miss Genevieve Graham.

Suddenly he became aware of the fact that a flunky stood at the door and was making frantic signals in his direction.

Surprised, he brought his steed to a halt, and as he did so the man rushed out to the sidewalk and called excitedly:

"You're a police hofficer, are you not?"

"Do I look like a sailor?" inquired Kinley blandly.

Paying no heed to this sarcasm, the fellow cried: "Well, for Heaven's sake, come inside with me! Something 'orrible 'as 'appened."

The man's face was so white and scared that Kinley, seriously alarmed, lost no time in dismounting.

"What's the matter?" he inquired as he tied his horse to a lamp-post.

"It's the master," replied the frightened flunky almost in a whisper. "E's lying dead in 'is bed, with a dagger in 'is 'eart."

Kinley's face turned deathly white.

"The master!" he gasped. "Good Heavens, man! you don't mean Colonel Wellers, do you?"

"Yes, sir, I do," replied the butler hysterically. "The poor colonel is dead. We broke in the door and found 'im lying in 'is bed, with the dagger in his 'eart and 'is 'and on the 'ilt. Come with me and I'll show you."

Dazedly, the policeman followed the trembling fellow up two flights of broad stairs and into a large bedroom, magnificently furnished, wherein a group of white-faced servants were gathered.

Some of the men stood around a massive old-fashioned mahogany bed, gazing as though fascinated at a terrible object which lay thereon. The maids, afraid to look at the awful sight, were huddled in a corner of the room, weeping hysterically, their hands covering their eyes.

At sight of Kinley's uniform, everybody began to talk at once.

"Ha! A policeman— Thank goodness you've come— The poor master— He died by his own hand— It's terrible, terrible— Lord have mercy on his soul— Poor gentleman, poor gentleman— Oh, why did he do it, why did he do it? And he with everything to live for, too!"

## CHAPTER V.

### A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION.

KINLEY held up his hand to command silence. Scarcely able to believe what he had heard, he stepped toward the bed.

One look was enough. There could be no doubt that Colonel Wellers was dead, and but little doubt that his death was due to the dagger which pierced his heart.

As the butler had said, the fingers of the colonel's right hand clutched the hilt of the dagger tightly. This fact, at first glance, seemed to point to suicide, but there was an unmistakable look of terror on the white face—an expression which did not lend itself to the theory that the colonel had deliberately taken his own life.

Quickly Kinley glanced about the room. The costly furniture was undisturbed. The window-shades were down, and the old-fashioned shutters were securely fastened. The room had but one door, and that had been battered in.

"Who broke in the door?" he demanded of the group of men-servants.

"I did, sir," replied the butler. "After we had knocked and knocked at it without getting any reply, we decided that something was wrong, and smashed it in."

"Tell me all about it," went on Kinley. "When was your master last seen alive?"

"At eleven o'clock last night, sir. 'E went to bed and told Edward, here, to wake 'im at nine o'clock this morning. Edward was the poor master's valet, you know.

"Edward knocked on the door at nine o'clock, but couldn't get any reply. He kept on knocking at intervals until about eleven o'clock, and when 'e found 'e couldn't get any response, 'e came and told me about it, and I guessed at once that something was wrong.

"I went up-stairs and tried to look through the key'ole; but the key was in the lock, and I could see nothing. Fi-

nally, 'owever, by pounding on the lock from the outside, I managed to shake the key out of the door. I heard it fall to the floor, and then I looked through the key'ole again.

"I could see the poor master lying quite still on the bed, and I fancied I could see blood-stains. Then, thoroughly alarmed, I got a big 'ammer and broke the door in, and we found the poor old master lying dead in 'is bed, just as you see 'im now."

"Humph!" exclaimed Kinley. "You're sure the door was locked and the key in the lock?"

"Positive, sir. There can be no question about that."

"And what have you done with the key? I should like to see it."

"Very good, sir. 'Ere it is."

Kinley examined the lock carefully. Then he applied the key to the lock and saw that it fitted.

Apparently, the butler was right. Such being the case, it was evident that the assassin could not have made his escape through the door.

It seemed ridiculous to suppose that a man could go through a door, lock the door behind him, and leave the key on the inside of the lock.

If the colonel had been murdered, the murderer must have made his escape in some other way.

Kinley stepped hurriedly toward the big baywindows and examined each of them carefully. There was a patent catch on each sash, and these catches were securely fastened.

It would have been a physical impossibility for an assassin to escape by one of the windows and lock the window after him from the outside. Besides, the shutters were of the old-fashioned kind, inside the window instead of outside, and each of them was closed and bolted.

Even assuming that the murderer could have fastened those windows behind him, he could not have drawn and bolted the shutters.

Kinley was baffled — completely baffled. The evidence of the locked door and windows seemed to point to suicide as the only solution of the problem.

And yet, knowing the colonel's secret fear, and taking into consideration the look of horror upon that still, white face, he felt convinced that the millionaire had not died by his own hand.

While he was trying to think out the solution of this problem, the street door-bell rang shrilly.

The butler went down and admitted two detective-sergeants from the Central Office.

Before rushing out of the front door to summon Kinley, the servant had telephoned to police headquarters; and, attracted by the prominence of the late colonel and the importance of the case, Detective-Sergeants Pryor and Milton had jumped into a cab and driven post-haste to the house.

They burst aggressively into the room, and, nodding curtly to Kinley, began to put the servants through a rigorous cross-examination.

The butler repeated to them what he had told to the mounted policeman.

The detectives examined the lock of the door and the fastenings of the windows.

"Did the colonel always lock his door and leave the key in the lock when he went to bed?" Detective-Sergeant Pryor inquired.

"Lately 'e 'as been in the habit of doing it, sir," replied the butler. "To tell the truth, sir, the master ain't been at all 'imself of late. We've all noticed it. 'E's been like a man afraid of 'is own shadow. 'E's been so 'orribly nervous at times that we thought 'e would 'ave a collapse."

"Ha!" exclaimed Pryor, turning to the other detective-sergeant. "It looks like a plain enough case. It's suicide, without a doubt. It couldn't be anything else. I suppose the poor chap's nerves got the better of him and drove him temporarily out of his mind. There's nothing to be done, except to await the arrival of the coroner."

"I beg your pardon," broke in Kinley. "I don't think it's a case of suicide at all. I think Colonel Wellers has been murdered. Have you follows noticed the look of terror on the dead man's face?"

The two detective-sergeants sniffed disdainfully.

"Don't be foolish, young fellow," said Pryor. "That look of terror doesn't signify murder. I've seen many suicides

that didn't look exactly happy and peaceful after they had done the deed. The doors and windows of this room were locked, and a murderer couldn't have got in the room and out again without unlocking them. Besides, look at that bell-cord hanging over the bed. Where does that connect with, Mr. Butler?"

He pointed, as he spoke, to a silken cord which hung from the ceiling. There was an ivory handle containing a little push-button on the end of the cord, and it hung only a few inches from the colonel's right hand.

"That button rings an electric bell in the room of Edward, the valet," replied the butler. "The colonel used to ring it when he needed Edward during the night."

"And if he had awakened and seen a murderer leaning over him, it would have been the simplest thing in the world for him to grab that cord and give the alarm, eh?" inquired the detective-sergeant.

"It certainly would, sir," answered the butler.

"Therefore, you see how ridiculous it is to try to make it a case of murder," commented Pryor, turning to Kinley.

Kinley was dumfounded. To his chagrin, he had failed to notice the bell-cord. It was situated so near the poor colonel's right hand that it certainly seemed plausible to suppose that he could have reached it, if he had found himself in sudden danger of assassination.

"Nevertheless," he replied, "I can't help thinking that the poor fellow did not die by his own hand. I feel positive that he was murdered."

The detective-sergeants frowned.

"See here," exclaimed Milton angrily, "we'll trouble you not to butt into this case with your opinions, officer. We're in charge, and we don't care to hear any suggestions from you. What are you doing here, anyway? You're on the traffic squad, aren't you?"

"Yes," replied Kinley, "I was on my way down to the sixth precinct, and as I passed this house the servants called me, so I came up."

"Well, you'd better be going on your way," growled Pryor. "We don't need you here. We can handle this case without your valuable assistance."

"I want to stay here until the coroner comes," explained Kinley.

"Well, you needn't do anything of the kind. The coroner doesn't need you. You can go."

These men were Kinley's superior officers, for both of them held the rank of sergeant. He was therefore obliged to obey.

Very reluctantly he went down-stairs.

"Arrogant fools!" he muttered angrily. "They call themselves detectives, but they couldn't detect a hole in the ground. I did intend to tell them something about the poor colonel's secret, but, since they're so smart, I won't tell them anything. Let them go back to headquarters and report this case as a suicide. I know it's a murder, and I'm going to find the murderer and bring him to justice."

Suddenly a surprising fact dawned upon him.

In his excitement he had until now actually forgotten all about the colonel's niece, Miss Genevieve Graham.

Where was she? He must see her at once, and ascertain the identity of the man whose picture she carried in her locket.

It would be a delicate and disagreeable task; but it was his duty to go through with it.

He must find this foreign-looking man whom the poor colonel had held in such deadly fear. It was no longer possible to consider the girl's feelings in the matter.

If the colonel was murdered, as Kinley firmly believed, there could be little doubt that this fellow was either directly or indirectly responsible for the crime.

He turned to the butler who had accompanied him down-stairs with the intention of opening the street-door for him.

"By the way," he remarked, "where is Miss Graham? Does she not know about her uncle's death?"

The butler's reply astonished him beyond measure.

"No, she does not. I wish I knew how to communicate with Miss Genevieve. She ought to be informed about this 'orrible affair right away; but, unfortunately, I don't know how to reach 'er.

"She left the house suddenly at nine o'clock this morning and took a train at the Grand Central Depot."

## CHAPTER VI.

### A DISTRESSING DOUBT.

KINLEY regarded the butler with a stare of amazement.

"Do you mean to say that Miss Graham left here at nine o'clock this morning without telling anybody where she was going?" he demanded incredulously.

"Well, she didn't leave word with any of us servants—not even with Mrs. Burns, the housekeeper. Miss Genevieve generally does leave 'er address with Mrs. Burns when she goes out of town, so that mail can be promptly forwarded, but this time she didn't do it.

"I suppose, 'owever, she told the poor master last night of 'er intention to go out of town this morning. I suppose she thought that as long as 'e knew where she was going there wasn't any necessity for telling any of us."

"Humph! And did she go alone?" inquired Kinley.

"She was alone, except for Marie, her French maid. She took 'er with 'er."

"Are you sure they went out of town?"

"Yes, Sandy drove them to the Grand Central Depot. Sandy says that the maid purchased the tickets; but he doesn't know what train they took. 'E says 'e carried the dress-suit cases into the depot, and Miss Genevieve told 'im that 'e need not wait any longer, and 'e left them sitting in the waiting-room. I 'eartily wish that Sandy could have managed to find out where Miss Genevieve was bound for, for she ought to be notified about poor master's death immediately. I suppose, though, wherever she may be, she'll read about this 'orrible affair in the newspapers and will 'urry right back.

"Poor Miss Genevieve! It will be a terrible shock to 'er, for she was very much attached to the master. I always used to say that they was more like father and daughter than uncle and niece."

"So I've heard others say," remarked Kinley. "By the way, I should like to have a little talk with Sandy, the coachman."

"All right. You'll find him in the stable, which is at the back of the 'ouse. 'E's all cut-up over the master's death, for, like most of us, 'e's been in his service for many years."

Kinley found the Scotchman sitting dejectedly in the stable, a prey to the deepest melancholy.

"Sandy," began the policeman, "I understand that you drove Miss Graham to the Grand Central Depot this morning?"

The coachman nodded listlessly.

"And you haven't any idea where she's gone?"

Sandy shook his head. He was always somewhat sparing of his words, and now his grief rendered him absolutely disinclined to talk.

"Have you any idea when she intends to return?"

Another negative shake of the head was the only reply the coachman vouchsafed.

"Did you notice anything peculiar about her when she went away?" continued Kinley. "I mean, was she agitated? Did she strike you as appearing at all unhappy or nervous?"

"Well, she was crying a wee bit."

"Crying, eh? What was she crying for?"

"I dinna ken. I dinna meddle with my employer's affairs. What they want me to know they tell me, and what they dinna tell me I dinna try to ken. I mind my own business, and I advise other folks to do the same."

With this stern reproof, the coachman got up and walked away, plainly intimating that he desired the conversation to come to an immediate end.

Kinley realized that it was useless to try to get any further details out of the fellow at that time, so he left the stable, mounted his horse, and continued his ride down-town to the sixth precinct.

He was in a very unhappy state of mind; for, despite his strenuous efforts to dismiss the thought as unjust and unwarranted, a startling question kept suggesting itself to him.

Was it possible that there was any connection between Colonel Weller's

awful end and the sudden departure of the girl from her home? Could it be possible that the public announcement of her uncle's death would not prove as genuine a surprise to the girl as the butler imagined?

It was more than a slim possibility that when she left the house she knew that her uncle was lying dead in his bed, and that he had met his death at the hands of the man whose picture she treasured to such an extent as to carry it in her locket.

Kinley had assumed all along that Miss Graham was in total ignorance of the enmity which existed between her uncle and this foreign-looking man. Perhaps this assumption was false.

Perhaps the girl had been fully aware of the fact that the man she loved thirsted for her uncle's life. Perhaps she knew that the villain had at last accomplished his dastardly purpose.

This would explain why she had left the house, weeping, without leaving any hint as to her destination. Naturally, she would not be brave enough to face the ghastly discovery which she knew a few hours must bring forth.

There was another theory, the suggestion of which caused Kinley to clench his fists in fury.

Perhaps the girl had gone to join the murderer. Having committed this awful crime, the wretch might have sent a message to her to join him in his flight.

"I can't believe it," he muttered moodily, as he urged his horse to a gallop. "She has the face of an angel. She doesn't look like the sort of girl that would countenance any kind of wrong-doing."

And yet he knew enough of human nature in general and of womankind in particular to realize that the most guileless and gentle faces often serve as screens for the blackest hearts and the most violent dispositions.

After all, he did not know this girl. He had only seen her twice in his life. Innocent as she appeared, she might be as cruel and conscienceless as she was beautiful.

"A man who judges a woman by her face is the worst kind of a fool," he told himself. "This girl may be a fiend incarnate for all I know. At any rate, even though she be as innocent as she looks, I must find her and question her concerning the man whose picture she wears in her locket. I am surely going to run down that scoundrel and avenge the poor old colonel. I'll give every second of my spare time to the task of bringing his cowardly assassin to justice."

Later on in the day the evening newspapers appeared on the streets, announcing in big head-lines the death of Colonel Maxim Wellers, the multimillionaire.

All the papers agreed that without doubt the unfortunate man had committed suicide. The coroner upon arriving on the scene of the tragedy and holding an investigation, had unhesitatingly declared that the colonel had taken his own life.

"There is not the slightest reason to suspect foul play," the coroner was quoted in the newspapers as declaring. "The fact that the doors and windows of the room were securely locked on the inside when the body was discovered, proves conclusively that the deceased must have committed suicide.

"The furniture in the room was not disarranged, and there was absolutely no evidence of a struggle. The colonel slept with an electric bell-button accessible to his right hand, and had he been attacked he could have rung for help immediately.

"As for the motive which impelled the deceased to take his life, I find upon inquiry among the servants of the household that the colonel for some time had given evidences of being in a highly nervous state of mind. Apparently, this nervousness finally resulted in the unseating of his reason, and he probably killed himself during a fit of temporary insanity.

"I may be able to learn more definite details as to the motive for the suicide when we can get into communication with the deceased's niece and next of kin, Miss Genevieve Graham, who, unfortunately, happens to be out of the city just now, and supposedly in complete ignorance of her uncle's death."

After his tour of duty was completed that evening, and he had taken his horse to the stables, Kinley bought an evening

newspaper and eagerly perused the coroner's published statement.

"And so he, too, thinks that it is a plain case of suicide, eh?" he mused. "Well, he's wrong—he must be wrong.

"I think I'll pay this coroner a visit and place before him some of the facts in my possession. Maybe that will cause him to change his mind."

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE CLUE OF THE BELL-CORD.

WHEN Kinley resolved to place before the coroner some of the facts in his possession, he laid an especial emphasis upon the word "some."

He had no intention of confiding to that official all that he knew about the case. He was not going to tell him anything about the photograph in Miss Graham's locket.

For the sake of the girl, he would keep that little detail to himself. There was really no necessity at present to bring her into the case.

He intended to find her and to force her to reveal to him the name and, if possible, the present whereabouts of the man whose picture she carried; but he had no intention of trying to connect her personally with her uncle's murder.

In fact, he made up his mind that, no matter what part she had played in the crime, she must be shielded. Not because he cared anything about her, Kinley fiercely assured himself; but because—well, just because she was a woman, and the most beautiful woman he had ever beheld.

Without waiting to doff his police uniform and put on the clothes of an ordinary citizen, Kinley jumped on a street-car and proceeded at once to the coroner's home on the upper East Side.

Coroner Krauss was a short, stout, irritable man, who possessed an air of much self-importance and an accent decidedly Teutonic.

He was at dinner when Kinley rang his front-door bell; but upon hearing that the visitor was a uniformed policeman, he arose from the table at once, for he always prided himself upon his devotion to duty, even at the expense of his own personal comfort.

"Vell, young man, vat can I do for you?" he exclaimed, by way of greeting.

"Coroner," replied Kinley, "I have called to see you in connection with the Colonel Wellers case. I see by the papers that you believe it to be suicide."

The coroner nodded vigorously.

"No question about it, my tear man," he replied. "Der poor colonel committed suicide as sure as Gott made little apples."

"I think not, coroner. I believe that Colonel Wellers was foully murdered."

The little official regarded Kinley with a glare of indignation.

"What for you come here to teach me my business?" he shouted. "*I* say it vas a suicide. I haf investigated the case personally meinself and I know. You policemans vas too tamned smart, sometimes. Foul murder, inteed! You don't know vat you're talking about."

"Yes, I do," replied Kinley quietly. "I have substantial reasons to support my theory—otherwise I should not have come to you."

The coroner looked at him a little uneasily. Like most vain public officials, he lived in perpetual fear of being ridiculed by the newspapers, and now he realized that if there was anything in what this policeman was saying, he—the coroner—would be roasted unmercifully by the press for declaring so positively that Colonel Wellers had committed suicide.

"You haf substantial reasons, eh?" he exclaimed, with considerable less heat. "Vell, let me hear vat they are."

"In the first place, I happen to know positively that Colonel Wellers had a mortal enemy who had sworn to kill him at the first opportunity. In the second place," continued Kinley, "I know that the colonel did not want to die. On the contrary, he was afraid of death. He knew that this man sought his life, and he was in deadly fear of him. Only last night he hired a personal body-guard to protect himself against this assassin.

"Now, any man possessed of ordinary intelligence must admit that it isn't logical to suppose that a man would hire a body-guard to protect himself one day,

and take his own life on the day following."

"Humph!" exclaimed the coroner, still more uneasily. "Who told you all dese tings?"

"The colonel himself told me."

The coroner's face turned pale.

"Der colonel himself!" he gasped. "Are you sure of vat you are saying, young man? Are you villing to svear it at der inquest?"

"Of course I am. You see, I am the man whom the colonel hired to be his body-guard. I was to enter his employ just as soon as my resignation from the police department was accepted. The colonel begged me to hurry my resignation through as quickly as possible, as he believed that every hour was fraught with danger for him."

Kinley then proceeded to narrate to the coroner the full details of his interview with Colonel Wellers on the preceding evening.

"In view of these facts," he concluded, "you must agree, coroner, that the unfortunate man did not take his own life; but met his death at the hands of the villain he so much feared."

The coroner heaved a great sigh of relief, and his lost self-confidence returned to him.

"I vill agree to noting of der kind," he shouted. "I thought you knew somedings important; but now I find that you know nodings. I still say that der colonel committed suicide."

"What?" exclaimed Kinley, in amazement.

"Yes. I haf no doubt that der poor colonel told you dose tings last night. I belief that der colonel did tell you dat he vas afraid for his life—dat some one vas trying to murder him; but I tink dat der poor fellow vas suffering from a hallucination. He vas crazy, and, like many crazy peoples, he imagined that there vas a plot to assassinate him. Often ven crazy people haf such ideas they end up by committing suicide.

"Only der oder day I had a case vere a poor crazy man called up police headquarters by der telephone and said he vas being followed by a crowd of assassins. After he had left der telephone he rushed out to der street and threw himself under a Broadway car. Yes. I haf no doubt it vas der same vay vid Colonel Vellers. He had a hallucination dat he vas going to be assassinated, and to fool der assassin—as he supposed—he took his own life."

"But what grounds have you for such a theory?" demanded Kinley indignantly.

"Vell, I haf good grounds. In der first place, der servants by der household told me dat der deceased has been in a highly nervous condition for some time. Dey say he seemed to be afraid of his own shadow.

"I haf seen many such men. They are der kind vot commit suicide generally.

"Den again, it is ridiculous to suppose dat anybody could haf got in dat room and murdered der poor man. Not only vas der doors and windows locked ven der body vas found, but dere vas dat bell-cord near der poor man's right hand. Der fact dat he didn't ring dat bell and summon assistance is proof to me dat he vas not killed by an assassin.

"No, sir. It is a case of suicide, pure and simple, and nobody can convince me by der contrary."

And as Kinley left the house he could not help asking himself whether, after all, it wasn't extremely probable that the coroner's theory was correct?

"Perhaps the colonel *was* insane when he told me that story," he mused. "Perhaps there wasn't a word of truth in it. I didn't think of the matter in that light before. That would explain the mystery of the picture in the locket.

"After all, the original of that picture may be a perfectly harmless and estimable gentleman. The colonel's belief that the fellow had murderous designs upon him may have been purely the product of the poor old gentleman's disordered brain.

"The chances are that I have made an infernal ass of myself — trying to make a sensational murder out of a plain case of suicide.

"Certainly, that bell-cord argument is a powerful one. For the life of me, I can't explain why the colonel, upon waking up and finding an assassin bending over him, couldn't have pushed the button at the end of the bell-rope and summoned his valet to the rescue.

"And it isn't possible that the colonel was killed while he slept. The horrified, fearful expression upon his features shows that he was wide awake when he met his death.

"Yes, the coroner and those detectives are probably right in their theory, and I have made a fool of myself. Before I admit, though, that I am in the wrong, I think I'll pay another visit to the scene of the tragedy."

When he reached the Wellers mansion an hour later, he found that the undertakers, armed with the authority of the coroner, had already arrived upon the scene and were preparing to embalm the body.

"Any word from Miss Graham yet?" he inquired of the butler.

"No. Not a word. I do wish we could get 'old of 'er. You see, there's nobody 'ere to give any horders as to the arrangements for the funeral and such. We are anxiously expecting to 'ear from Miss Genevieve. I suppose she'll telegraph, or else come right back when she reads in the newspapers about the master's 'orrible death."

Kinley went up-stairs to the scene of the tragedy. He made a careful examination of the room, in the hope of discovering some little clue which would indicate that the colonel had not died by his own hand.

For a time he was unsuccessful in his search; but suddenly he was seized with an idea, and he stepped eagerly across the room toward the bell-cord, which dangled from the ceiling over the massive mahogany bed.

Kinley examined the ivory handle and push-button at the end of the cord very circumspectly. His eager gaze traveled toward the ceiling where the silken cord joined an insulated wire which ran all the way to the valet's room.

Kinley glanced at this wire, and suddenly uttered an exclamation of joyful triumph.

He rushed excitedly from the room, and outside the door bumped into Edward, the French valet.

"Ha!" exclaimed Kinley. "You're just the very man I want. If I am not mistaken, that bell-cord in your master's room connects with a bell in your room. Tell me, my friend, when was the last time you heard that bell ring?"

"You mean, sir, the bell which summons me to my poor master. It was yesterday morning. My master rang for me, as usual, to shave and dress him. I am sure I have not heard the bell since."

"Ha!" exclaimed Kinley again. "So the bell *was* in good working order yesterday, eh? Well, it's out of order now. The wire has been neatly cut in two."

And to himself he added: "Unless I am very much mistaken, the person who severed that wire is responsible for the death of Colonel Maxim Wellers.

"It's only a small clue, but to my mind it knocks out the suicide theory of the coroner and those smart Alecks of the detective-bureau.

"I was right, after all. The colonel was murdered in his bed, and the villain who murdered him was cunning enough first to take the precaution of cutting that wire.

"But cunning as he may be, I'm going to find him and bring him to justice."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### AN OBSTINATE CORONER.

ELATED by the discovery he had made, Kinley hurried back to the home of the coroner.

Judging by the expression on his face, that official was none too pleased to see him again.

"Vell," he snapped, "vat's the matter now? I suppose you've come back here to place before me another tamn-fool story regarding der suicide of Colonel Vellers, eh?"

"I've come back here, coroner, to tell you that your theory is all wrong. The colonel did not commit suicide. He was murdered, as I told you before."

"And I told *you* before dat I don't need you to teach me mein pusiness," cried the little man angrily. "I say it vas a suicide. Dat's all dere is to it. I don't care vot you think. You're only an ordinary policeman, and I am der coroner. I haf been a coroner for five years and nefer vonce have I yet made a mistake. I know ven a man commits

suicide and ven dere has been foul play. All der evidence in dis affair points to a plain case of suicide—particularly der evidence of der bell-cord which hung ofer der bed of der deceased."

"On the contrary," retorted Kinley, "that bell-cord proves that the colonel was murdered. Since I was here an hour ago, coroner, I have learned something of great importance. I am now in a position to explain to you why it was that the unfortunate colonel did not ring that bell and summon assistance when he awoke and found the assassin in his room. He couldn't do it because the bell was broken."

"Broken!" gasped the coroner, turning pale.

"Yes, sir. The bell was out of order. Probably the poor old man did grab that cord and press the ivory button repeatedly when he saw that his life was in danger; but it was a futile effort. The bell didn't ring. It couldn't have rung. Somebody had previously cut the wire which led to the valet's room."

"Are you sure of vat you say?" gasped the coroner.

"Positive. After leaving you, I went at once to the scene of the murder, made another examination, and discovered the severed bell-cord. The two ends of the cut wire are still hanging from the ceiling, near the door. You can go up there and see for yourself, if you wish. I hope you will now agree that the case is one of murder, not suicide."

But the coroner had by this time recovered his self-possession. He was a man of very stubborn disposition, and never willing to admit that he had made a mistake.

"I don't care vether der vire vas cut or vether it ain't cut," he snapped. "Still do I say dat it vas a plain case of suicide. Even leaving aside altogether der argument of der bell over der bed, dere still remains der fact dat der deceased vas found in a room der doors and vindows of vich vere securely locked on der inside. Der murderer couldn't have gone out and locked der door behind him, leaving der key on der inside. Neider could he have escaped by der vinders and den fastened der vinders on der inside, and der inside shutters also. To suppose such a thing is absurd."

"I'll admit," said Kinley, "that the facts you mention do constitute a difficult problem; but I feel confident that it can be solved. The assassin must have had some other way of getting out."

"Mein friend, dere is no oder way," replied the coroner triumphantly. "I made a careful examination ven I visited der scene of der tragedy. Nobody could have climbed up or down der chimney, because der hole vas too small. I looked into dat particularly."

"Perhaps there is a secret sliding panel in one of the walls," suggested Kinley, seized with a sudden inspiration. "I've heard of such things being found in old mansions, and I understand the colonel's Fifth Avenue house is a very old one—one of the oldest houses on the avenue, I believe. I didn't think of the panel theory before. I guess I'll go back to the house and make another examination of the room."

"You can safe yourself der trouble," declared the coroner. "I haf already investigated der valls of dat room. You think maybe you vas smart. Let me tell you I thought of der possibility of der being a sliding panel in der vall as soon as I arrived on der scene. I carefully sounded efery inch of each vall vid my kernuckles, and I can svear dat all der valls is solid.

"No, sir; if dere vas a murderer in dere, he certainly vent out, eider by der door or der vinders, and dat vas impossible. Derefore, I say again der colonel committed suicide."

"And you refuse to entertain the theory that he may have been murdered?"

"Yes, sir. I say such a theory is all foolishness."

"Then, how do you account for the fact that the electric wire was cut? Don't you agree that that looks as if somebody sought to prevent Colonel Wellers from summoning assistance?"

"No, sir. Der vire may not have been cut at all. It may have broke of its own accord. Sometimes electric wires vear out and break by demselves. Perhaps dis vire vas broke for days before der tragedy."

"No, it wasn't. I have proof that the bell was in good working order up to a few hours before the colonel went to bed."

"Vell, I don't care about that. It's an unimportant detail, anyvay, compared wid der fact dat der doors and vinders of der room vas found locked.

"I say it vas a suicide, and I don't vant to hear any more foolishness from you about it. You haf bothered me too much alretty vid your crazy arguments vot ain't arguments. Go avay and don't come back here any more. I don't want to see or hear from you again."

Kinley shrugged his shoulders, laughed scornfully, and walked out of the house.

"Silly little man!" he muttered. "He's as stubborn as a mule, and he has about as much intelligence as that beast. It's strange what queer propositions our political system sometimes place in public offices. Before I get through with this case I'll make him look sick, as sure as my name is Kinley."

On the sidewalk he stood for a few minutes, hesitating as to whether or not he should go to the detective bureau and tell the "boss" what he had discovered concerning the cut bell-wire.

"I feel sure that down at the bureau they'd realize the importance of that clue and get to work on it at once," he mused. "But then I feel equally sure that they'd take the case out of my hands and not give me any credit for my work. I guess I'll keep my own counsel until I can place my hands on the murderer.

"My next step must be to find out how the assassin managed to get out of that room, after committing his dastardly deed. It *does* seem absurd to suppose that he could have made his exit by the door or windows. There must be some other way out of that chamber.

"I'm not so sure that that panel-in-the-wall theory of mine is not the correct one after all. That foolish little coroner says that he examined the walls and found them to be solid; but I guess his powers of discernment are not very keen. I think I'll go back to the scene of the tragedy and make another examination of that room."

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE CLUE OF THE BLOTTER.

"BACK again," remarked the butler somewhat sourly, as he opened the door in response to Kinley's ring. "Ain't we hever going to be hallowed to 'ave hany peace and quiet? This is the third time you've been 'ere to-day, hofficer. What do you want now?"

"Have you received any word from Miss Graham yet?" inquired Kinley, quite unruffled by the flunky's querulous tone.

"No. We 'aven't 'eard a word. There's been newspaper reporters 'ere by the dozens asking for 'er. I'm sick and tired of opening the door to them and telling them that Miss Genevieve ain't at 'ome. I do wish she'd hurry up and come back."

"So do I. I'd very much like to see her," replied Kinley. "I think I'll go up-stairs, my friend, and take another look at that room."

"What — again? You've been up there twice already. You've seen everything there is to be seen. It ain't decent to be bothering us so much."

Without paying any heed to this protest, Kinley went on up. He examined with great care each of the four walls of the bedroom in which the tragedy had occurred.

There was not an inch of wall-space that he did not sound with his knuckles, in the hope of hearing a faint hollow sound which would betoken the presence of a secret panel.

But his search was quite unsuccessful in this respect. The walls appeared to be as solid as if they had been hewn out of rock.

They were covered with heavy burlap of light-blue tint, and Kinley's naked eye could not detect even a suggestion of a break in this wall-covering.

He did not trust to his naked eye, however, and, taking a strong magnifying-glass from his pocket, he went over every inch of the burlap, hoping to discover some slight evidence of a secret opening.

He even went to the length of removing the rich tapestries which ornamented the walls, suspecting that the panel he sought might be concealed behind one of them.

At length, however, he gave up the search, with a sigh, satisfied that if there was any such panel it would be necessary to tear down the walls in order to discover it.

Then he turned his attention to the floor, thinking that possibly there might be a trap-door which connected with the room beneath.

He lifted the costly rug and examined the smooth, hard boards. The floor surface appeared to be as unbroken as the surface of the walls.

And yet so sure was he that the colonel had been murdered, and so impossible did it appear that the assassin could have made his escape through the locked door or windows, that even the high ceiling of the room did not escape his suspicion.

It was a very ornate ceiling. Its area was covered by a magnificent hand-painted design. Kinley's gaze traveled over every inch of it, in search of some indication of a cunningly concealed trap-door.

This search, too, proved vain, and he had to admit that it seemed the height of absurdity to suppose that, even had such a trap-door existed in the ceiling, an assassin could have made his escape thereby, without leaving behind some evidence of how he had climbed up there.

It suddenly occurred to Kinley that perhaps in the door of the room there was a sliding panel through which the assassin might have made his escape without disturbing the lock.

But when he examined the door, he found that it was made of one solid piece of oak. That theory, too, was out of the question. Kinley had to confess that he was baffled, completely baffled.

"I'm positive that that assassin got in and out of this room some way," he muttered, "and it isn't reasonable to suppose that he escaped through that door or those windows. Then, how the deuce did he manage it?

"I feel sure that there is an answer to the question; but I'll be hanged if I can guess it. No human being could climb through a keyhole; and, besides, even if that were possible, the key was in the door to prevent him from doing so in this case."

He gave up the problem for the time being, and turned his attention to other matters.

He climbed on a table and examined the ends of the cut bell-wire through the magnifying-glass.

This examination told him that without doubt the wire had been cut, and had not broken off of its own accord, as the coroner had suggested.

"As I supposed," he mused; "somebody deliberately cut that wire, and that somebody is the murderer of Colonel Maxim Wellers. I haven't the slightest doubt of it.

"Now, it seems to me that the person who murdered the colonel must have been in this room previous to the murder. He must have known, in advance, of this bell which connected with the valet's room; because, otherwise, it isn't likely he would have possessed enough foresight to cut that wire to prevent the colonel from giving the alarm.

"Yes, the murderer in all probability had full knowledge of his surroundings. That's a very important point. I wonder why it didn't occur to me before? It looks very much as if somebody belonging to this household either murdered the colonel or else aided the assassin to accomplish his brutal work successfully.

"I wish I could find Miss Graham. I can't do much more on the case until I have had a talk with her."

It suddenly flashed across his mind that it might be well to pay a visit to the colonel's library.

He recollected that in that library there was a safe from which the colonel, on the occasion of their interview, had taken the cabinet-size photograph of the man he held in such dread.

It now struck Kinley that perhaps there were important papers in this safe—papers in which the assassin might be interested.

It was just possible that, after murdering the colonel, the murderer had paid a visit to the library and sought to get possession of some of these papers.

Kinley lost no time in ascertaining if such had been the case. He went down a flight of stairs and found his way to the library, which he entered without asking leave of anybody.

Somehow, he half expected to find the door of the safe broken open; but, to his disappointment, it was intact. The combination was still set. The big room seemed to be in perfect order. There was no evidence of an intruder having been there.

"It's too bad," sighed Kinley.

His gaze suddenly fell upon a big polished mahogany desk in a corner of the room. He walked over to it and without compunction began to examine the various papers in the pigeonholes, hoping to find some document which would give him more definite information concerning the assassin.

"I'm sorry that the poor colonel didn't tell me more about the wretch," he mused. "He didn't even confide to me the cause of the enmity between them. That knowledge would be of great help to me now. Perhaps I shall be lucky enough to find among these papers some reference to the fellow and his relations to the colonel."

But his search proved vain. The papers in the pigeonholes were unimportant and threw absolutely no light upon the mysterious tragedy.

Kinley was just about to turn away from the desk and leave the library, satisfied that there were no clues to be obtained in that room, when his attention was attracted by the big blue blotting-pad which covered the flat of the desk.

The blotter in this pad was not fresh. There were many ink-stains upon it, and Kinley noticed that these ink-stains were all on the left side of the pad. The right end of the pad was spotless.

Uttering a sharp exclamation, he glanced at the cut glass ink-well, and noted that it was considerably nearer to the left end of the desk than it was to the right end.

"Good Heavens!" he gasped. "Can it be possible? I didn't notice it when I was talking to the poor old man last night. If it really is true, it's the most important discovery I've made yet. I'll soon find out."

He hastily touched the ivory bell-button which he had seen the colonel press the day before, when the latter had desired to summon the butler. A minute afterward the latter appeared, a somewhat startled look upon his face.

"Oh, it's you, is hit!" exclaimed the flunky, an expression of relief spreading across his features as he recognized the policeman. "I wondered who it could be as was ringing the poor master's bell. It quite scared me, for I 'ad forgotten about your being in the 'ouse, and I almost thought it was ghosts. What is hit you want?"

"Tell me, my friend," cried Kinley excitedly, "wasn't your master left-handed?"

"Hof course 'e was."

"I guessed so by the position of that ink-well and the ink-stains on that pad. He wrote and did everything with his left hand, eh?"

"Hof course 'e did; but what about hit?"

"What about it?" repeated Kinley excitedly. "My friend, I have found the proof I sought. Your master didn't commit suicide, even though he *was* found dead in bed with a dagger through his heart and his hand on the hilt. You will bear witness to the fact that it was his right hand that clasped the dagger, and not his left."

The butler was not a brilliant man mentally, but he did not fail to grasp the significance of this statement.

"Good 'Evings!" he gasped. "What you say is true. It *was* 'is right 'and which 'eld the 'ilt, and the poor master wouldn't 'ave stabbed 'imself with 'is right 'and. There's something queer there—something very queer. It's jolly clever of you to 'ave found it hout. Hit looks as hif the poor master must 'ave been murdered. I'll go and tell Mrs. Burns about it right away."

"Stay!" cried Kinley. "I'd prefer that you wouldn't tell Mrs. Burns. You'd do me a favor if you wouldn't say a word about this to anybody. Let everybody continue to think your master committed suicide until—until I've arrested his murderer."

"Do you think you'll be able to do hit?" inquired the butler, looking at Kinley admiringly.

"Yes, I feel sure I shall run him down eventually. I heartily wish I could get into communication with Miss Graham. I think she could help me quite a little. I wonder where on earth she could have gone?"

"I wish I could hanswer that question," replied the butler, with a sigh. "I'd give a great deal to 'ave 'er return 'ome."

The words were no sooner out of his mouth than there came a ring at the front-door bell.

One of the servants opened the door, and from the library Kinley and the butler could hear a girl's excited voice in the hallway below.

"Good 'Evings!" cried the butler joyfully. "Our wish 'as come true. I'd recognize that voice among a million. That's Miss Genevieve come back."

## CHAPTER X.

### A GREAT SURPRISE.

THE butler hurried down-stairs to receive his young mistress. Kinley waited in the library, through the open door of which he could overhear everything that went on down below in the reception-hall.

"Is it really true? Is my poor uncle really dead?" Kinley heard Miss Graham inquire.

Mrs. Burns, the aged housekeeper, sobbed out an answer in the affirmative.

"And did he do as they say he did? Did he die by his own hand?" demanded the girl in a tone so tense that Kinley, although he could not see it, could easily picture the horrified expression on her face.

"Yes, Miss Genevieve, I'm sorry to say he did—poor gentleman. The police and the coroner have been here, and they all say that the poor master must have stabbed himself in a fit of insanity."

The girl gave vent to a moan which went straight to Kinley's heart.

"Oh, dear," she cried, "it's terrible! When I read the news in the newspapers I scarcely believed it. The newspapers so often get things wrong. I hoped it was so in this case. I hurried home, hoping to be told that it was all an awful mistake. Oh, it's too terrible to realize! My dear uncle dead! My only near relative killed by his own hand! And he was such a dear, kind old man. My own father couldn't have been more tender with me. Oh, uncle, dear uncle, why did you do it?"

The old housekeeper, who had known Genevieve since the latter was a little girl, expressed her sympathy by a fit of violent sobbing.

Kinley heard another feminine voice, with a decidedly Parisian accent, tearfully exclaim: "Oh, *ma pauvre mad-emoiselle,* I am so veree sorry! Eet is tereeble, tereeble!"

Kinley correctly guessed that the Parisian accent belonged to Miss Graham's French maid, who had accompanied her mistress on her trip out of town.

"Poor little girl!" he muttered, referring to the mistress, and not to the maid. "She certainly does seem all cut up over her uncle's death. It sounds like honest emotion, too; but, of course, one cannot tell. She may be a clever little actress. Most women are.

"However, if I can get out of the house without being noticed, I think I'll do it. Anxious as I am to have a talk with that girl and learn from her the secret of the man in the locket, I don't think it would be quite decent to bother her just now. I guess I'd better postpone the interview for a while."

Just then Miss Graham spoke again, and what she said caused Kinley to creep out of the library and peer over the balustrade of the broad staircase, so anxious was he not to lose a word.

"Somehow," said the girl, "I scarcely can believe that my poor uncle committed suicide. He seemed so bright and cheerful the last few days—more cheerful than he had been in weeks. Oh, it doesn't seem possible that he could have taken his own life! Are the police quite sure that he did?"

These words greatly surprised the listening policeman.

"By jiminy!" he muttered. "It doesn't look as if she knows anything, after all. That foreign scoundrel whose picture she carries couldn't have taken her into his confidence. But she may be bluffing," he added cautiously. "She may be an unusually clever woman."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Genevieve," broke in the voice of the butler, "but there is one police 'hofficer as 'as been 'ere to-day who doesn't think the poor master committed suicide. 'E thinks 'e was brutally murdered. 'E's hup-stairs now in the library, miss, waiting to see you."

"Silly, blabbing fool!" growled Kinley. "I told him to keep his mouth shut. It serves me right, though, for taking an idiot like that into my confidence. I ought to have had enough sense to refrain from telling him anything."

The girl's reply made him gasp.

"You say this policeman is now waiting up-stairs in the library, Roberts?" she said. "I will see him immediately."

"Very good, miss. Shall I tell 'im to come down 'ere to you?" inquired the butler.

"No. I will go up-stairs to him."

A minute later she uttered an exclamation of surprise as she entered the library and gazed upon the uniformed traffic-squad policeman.

"Why," she exclaimed, "you're Mr. Kinley, the brave policeman who stopped our runaway team the other day!"

Kinley bowed. His heart beat fast with exultation at the flattering thought that even in the midst of her great trouble she recognized him and remembered his name.

He did not fail to notice, however, that she was wearing the little gold locket. It hung from a gold chain around her neck.

"Our butler tells me that you do not accept the theory of the others that my poor uncle committed suicide," she went on. "Won't you please tell me all you know about the case?"

Kinley blurted out a suggestion that she postpone the matter until some other time, when she would be less distressed than at present. But the girl shook her head resolutely.

"No. I should like to hear about it now, if you please. I am quite calm and collected. Like you, I feel that my poor uncle did not take his own life.

"Shocked as I am over his death, I am almost as greatly shocked by the way they say he died. He always used to say that only a coward would take his own life; and uncle was not a coward. It would be a great relief to me to feel assured that he did not commit suicide."

Kinley looked at her searchingly. Her tone sounded sincere enough.

"Jove!" he said to himself. "How beautiful she is! Could a girl with such an innocent face be guilty of dissimulation? Can she be acting a lie? It doesn't seem possible."

And yet he could not help reflecting upon the fact that the most innocent-appearing faces often serve as masks for the most unscrupulous of women, and the sight of the gold locket she wore served to steel his heart against her and make him ready to believe the worst.

Still watching her face intently, he replied:

"I am glad to say, Miss Graham, that I am able to give you such assurance. I can state positively that your unfortunate uncle did not take his own life. He was murdered. I have ample proof of it."

"And who murdered him?" asked the girl, with a little gasp of horror.

"I have been waiting here to see you in the hope that you would furnish me with an answer to that question, Miss Graham," answered Kinley, looking straight into her eyes. "You can do so if you will."

"I?" gasped the girl, in apparent surprise.

"Yes, by telling me the name of the person whose photograph you carry in that locket," Kinley went on, pointing sternly toward the little trinket, which sparkled beneath the electric lights.

The girl's eyes were distended with amazement. On her face was an expression of mingled wonder and indignation, but no trace of the alarm he had expected to conjure by his words.

"I don't understand you," she gasped. "This locket and the picture it contains —what can they have to do with my uncle's death?"

"Miss Graham," replied Kinley, in a voice so tense that it was almost a hiss, "the man whose photograph you carry in that locket killed your uncle."

The girl flashed upon him a look of scorn and anger.

"How dare you, sir!" she cried. "This locket does not contain the photograph of a *man*. It holds the picture of my dear friend, Miss Amelia Potter, who died six years ago. What is the meaning of this impertinence?"

Kinley's heart suddenly became as heavy as lead. The girl's reply convinced him that she knew all about her uncle's murder, and that her innocent face and expressions of grief and horror were nothing more than evidences of her skill as an actress.

He guessed that to shield the murderer of her unfortunate uncle she had already removed the former's photograph from her locket and replaced it with her

friend's picture, and hence her bold reply to his question and her pretended indignation.

His admiration for this beautiful girl suddenly changed to contempt. There arose within him a cordial dislike for her, amounting almost to hatred.

"Let me see this picture of your dear departed *woman* friend," he said with a sneer.

He imagined that she would eagerly open the locket at his request and triumphantly produce the picture she had substituted for the original photograph. But, to his surprise, she did nothing of the kind.

"I beg your pardon," she said haughtily. "Even though you are an officer of the law, I question your right to pry into my personal affairs. And, besides, I don't like the tone of your voice. It is not even polite. I must ask you to leave this house at once."

It suddenly struck Kinley that her refusal to show him the photograph might be due to the fact that, despite her statement, the locket still contained the picture of the assassin. Perhaps she had neglected to remove it and was telling a barefaced lie when she said that the trinket contained the picture of her girl friend.

Without a word of apology, he suddenly leaned forward, grabbed the locket before she could divine his intention, and tugged at it so roughly that he tore it from its chain.

"How dare you, sir!" she gasped, her eyes ablaze with anger. "You shall be punished for this outrage."

And she pressed the ivory button on the library-table.

With a defiant laugh, Kinley pried open the locket and found—the miniature photograph of the man who had threatened to kill the colonel.

"So this is the picture of your dear departed girl friend who died six years ago, is it, Miss Graham?" he contemptuously sneered.

He held the photograph triumphantly toward her. She gazed upon it with dilated eyes.

"Good Heavens! How did that picture get there?" she gasped. "I never saw it before."

Kinley's answer was an incredulous laugh. The form of the butler suddenly appeared at the open door.

"Did you ring for me, miss?" he inquired.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE TABLES TURNED.

KINLEY awaited with intense interest the reply the girl would make to the butler.

Would she merely order the man to show him to the door, or would she, in anger and mortification, go further than that and command the servant to summon a policeman and have Kinley arrested for the outrage he had committed by forcibly seizing the locket and tearing it from her chain?

Kinley realized that his violence had been quite unauthorized, and the fact that he wore a policeman's uniform could not save him from being arrested if the girl chose to lodge a complaint against him.

Greatly to his surprise, however, Miss Graham did not adopt either course.

"Yes, Roberts," she said, "I did ring for you; but I find I don't want you now. And now, sir," she exclaimed, turning to Kinley when the butler had left the room, "if you will be good enough to drop that air of incredulity and to remove that sneer from your face, I should like to have a talk with you about the picture."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Graham," replied Kinley eagerly. "I did not intend to appear incredulous, and I was not conscious of the sneer. By all means, let us talk about that picture. In the name of your dead uncle, I beg you to tell me the name of the man whose photograph I hold in my hand."

"I can't do it," said the girl. "Whether you believe my statement or not is a matter of indifference to me; but I have never seen that picture before. I haven't the remotest idea how it got into my locket. That locket has always contained the photograph of my dear friend, Amelia Potter.

"Amelia left me the locket as a keepsake when she died, and that is why I treasure it so highly and was so grateful to you for returning it yesterday.

"Somebody has taken out Amelia's

photograph and replaced it with the picture of this man. Who he is I cannot even guess. To the best of my recollection, I have never seen him in the flesh."

The girl spoke with such apparent sincerity that Kinley began to wonder if he had not been too hasty in jumping at conclusions. After all, it was quite possible that Miss Graham was telling the truth; that the presence of this man's picture in the locket had been quite unknown to her.

Somebody might have surreptitiously removed the girl's picture and replaced it with the photograph of the assassin for some special and sinister purpose.

It was all quite possible, although, of course, not very probable.

And if such was indeed the case, what a boor he had shown himself toward this gentle girl! He began to repent of the rough, rude tactics he had employed in endeavoring to extract the truth from her.

"Tell me, Miss Graham," he said, with a hint of contrition in his voice, "when was the last time you opened that locket?"

"Oh, it must have been some months ago. I have worn it almost constantly for the past six years, but I very rarely had occasion to open it. Naturally I thought all along that poor Amelia's picture was inside."

"Well, isn't it rather strange that you shouldn't have looked more frequently at the picture of the dead friend you held in such very high regard?" Kinley inquired a little suspiciously.

"Not at all," replied the girl. "There is a large picture of Amelia up-stairs in my room, so that her dear face was before me every day. I merely carried her miniature in my locket as a matter of sentiment, and there was no particular reason why I should want to open it."

Kinley realized that this explanation was perfectly logical. He was more and more inclined to believe that the girl was telling the truth.

"And you have never seen this man whose photograph is now in your locket?"

"I have already told you so," she replied with much dignity.

"Did you not know, Miss Graham, that your uncle's life has been in danger for some time past—that the poor old gentleman lived in constant fear of assassination?"

She looked at him in horrified surprise.

"No," she gasped. "I did not know that. Is it true?"

"Yes, it is the truth. Your uncle feared the original of that photograph. He told me so very recently. You will remember that the colonel invited me up here and said he wanted to have a talk with me on a matter of business. Well, that was the subject we discussed. He showed me a photograph, and told me that the original was his worst enemy, and that his life was threatened by him. He offered me a position as his personal body-guard to protect him against this man."

"Good Heavens!" gasped the girl. "My uncle never told me a word about it. I have noticed for some time past that there was something on his mind which worried him exceedingly, but I never could persuade him to confide in me. Whenever I asked him what was troubling him he would always laugh and say that he wasn't worried at all—that it was my imagination. And you think it was this horrible man who killed my poor uncle?"

"Yes, I feel almost positive of it. The assassin took elaborate precautions to convey the impression that your uncle committed suicide; but there are very strong, absolutely convincing, proofs to the contrary."

And Kinley proceeded to narrate in detail the reasons which led him to believe that the colonel had been assassinated.

"But you say that the doors and windows of my poor uncle's bedroom were afterward found locked!" exclaimed the girl. "Doesn't that make the theory of murder almost untenable? How could the assassin have got in and out of that room and locked the door behind him, leaving the key on the inside?"

Kinley shook his head and sighed.

"I regret to say that I can't answer that question at present, Miss Graham," he said. "But there must be an answer, and I am going to find it. I was in hopes that you would be able to tell me of some secret door in the room, or something of that sort."

The girl shook her head.

"No, I have never heard of any. To the best of my knowledge, there was no way out of that room except by the door or windows."

"Well, there *must* be another way out, and I am going to discover it before I get through," declared Kinley grimly. "I have vowed to avenge your uncle's death, Miss Graham, by running down his assassin."

"Oh, I do hope you succeed!" cried the girl earnestly. "You can rely upon me to give you all the help I can. My whole life and fortune shall be devoted to the task of bringing this cowardly wretch to justice."

And as she stood there, her eyes flashing, her tiny mouth set in a line of grim determination, her bosom heaving with emotion, there was no mistaking her earnestness nor her sincerity.

Kinley believed in her then. He was satisfied that she was not acting a lie. He felt heartily ashamed of himself for ever having suspected her of complicity in this awful crime.

But a second afterward there flashed across his mind a startling thought. He had forgotten something—something the sudden recollection of which brought back his suspicions with a rush.

"Miss Graham," cried he almost imploringly, "I learned this morning that you left this house quite suddenly to take a train somewhere, and that you were in tears. Would you mind telling me where you went to and what was the cause of your emotion?"

"I went out of town to go to the bedside of a dying woman—my old nurse, to whom I was very much attached. I received a telephone message, informing me that she was very low, and I went to her at once."

"And you didn't tell anybody here where you were going, eh?" inquired Kinley.

"No. I don't believe I did. I did knock at my uncle's bedroom door, with the intention of telling him the bad news, but, as I could get no reply, I concluded that he was asleep, and didn't think it worth while to disturb him."

"But, in that case, why didn't you leave word with some of the servants?" demanded Kinley.

"I might have done so," the girl answered; "but I was so upset by the bad news that I suppose the thought didn't occur to me."

Kinley's last doubt was set at rest. He felt thoroughly convinced that she was telling the truth.

"Miss Graham," he said contritely, "I feel that I owe you a most humble apology. I have done you a great injustice. Until now I have been foolish enough to suspect you of being concerned in your uncle's murder,"

He repented of the words as soon as he had uttered them, for if he had struck her with his fist he could not have produced a more startling effect. Her face turned first crimson, and then very white. Her eyes flashed indignantly.

"You—suspected—*me?*" she gasped.

"Yes. I am very sorry. You see, I thought that you were—er—acquainted with the man whose picture is in your locket. Under the circumstances, you could not blame me for being suspicious."

"Blame you!" she cried, angrily stamping her little foot. "Blame you! I should say I do blame you. Nothing you can say by way of explanation can excuse such a cruel insult. Suspect *me* of being concerned in the murder of my poor dear uncle! Oh, how could you? How could you?"

"Forgive me!" begged Kinley penitently, noting with great alarm the fact that she was on the verge of tears.

"No, sir. I shall never forgive you for that. I was disposed to overlook your previous rudeness, but this is too much. I never want to see you again. I shall instruct the servants to deny you admittance to this house. I am sorry now that I answered any of your impertinent questions. If I had guessed what was in your mind when you asked them I should have refused to say a word. Suspect *me*, indeed!"

"But I don't suspect you now, Miss Graham," protested Kinley. "I am thoroughly satisfied that my former suspicions were quite without foundation."

She laughed scornfully.

"For this relief, much thanks," she said. "It is very good of you to say so. I suppose I ought to feel deeply grateful to you for having undergone a change of mind. And now, sir," she added, appar-

ently struck by a sudden idea, "since you are good enough to declare me free from suspicion, why shouldn't I turn the tables and *suspect you?* It seems to me that there is ample cause for me to do so."

"Suspect *me!*" gasped the surprised Kinley. "What do you mean? Suspect me of what?"

"Suspect you of being concerned in the murder of my uncle." She looked thoroughly in earnest as she said it.

"But that is preposterous, Miss Graham," protested the policeman.

"Is it? I beg your pardon, but I don't think it is. You say that the mysterious photograph in this locket is the photograph of the man who murdered my uncle. Somebody placed that picture in the locket without my knowledge. It was you who brought the locket to me, after I had dropped it on Fifth Avenue. How do I know that you didn't take the liberty of exchanging the photographs while the locket was in your hands? I didn't think of it before, but since you have raised the finger of suspicion, Mr. Kinley, it seems to me that it points pretty straight toward yourself!"

## CHAPTER XII.

### KINLEY'S LITTLE RUSE.

THIS complete turning of the tables so amazed Kinley that he stood there for a few seconds as though petrified.

"What are you saying, Miss Graham?" he at length managed to stammer. "You can't really believe that I had anything to do with the substitution of that picture in your locket?"

"Well, I do honestly believe that somebody put the picture there, after I had dropped the locket on the avenue yesterday," she answered. "It seems to me that the person who picked it up must have effected the change of pictures."

"But it was I who picked up the locket," declared Kinley. "I feel satisfied that nobody except myself touched it from the time you dropped it until the time I brought it back to you."

"Very well, sir," retorted the girl mercilessly. "Then, under the circumstances, I must accuse you of having inserted this photograph in place of my dear Amelia's. Perhaps you will explain what was your object in doing so."

For reply, Kinley seized his hat and strode indignantly toward the door of the library.

"Miss Graham," he said with much dignity, turning as he reached the threshold, "you are making a great mistake. Some day, when I have caught your uncle's murderer and solved the mystery of this locket, you will be sorry for the injustice you have done me. In the meantime you need not bother about giving orders to your servants to bar me from this house. I shall not trouble you with my presence here again."

He turned on his heel and passed through the doorway, but she called out to him to come back.

"I can't let you go away under the impression that I really suspect you," she cried. "I wanted to hurt you as you have hurt me. I desired to make you feel the humiliation you have made me feel. But I can't do it. You only recently saved my life, and I can't be ungrateful. I know that you did not change the picture in this locket. I know that you are not implicated in the murder of my uncle. I beg of you to forget what I said about barring you from this house. You are welcome to come here whenever you please, and I hope that you will allow me to help you run down my poor uncle's assassin."

Kinley's heart began to beat rapidly.

"Oh, if only I were something more than a plain policeman," he mused—"if I were the Fred Kinley of the old days, gentleman of leisure and heir to my father's millions—I think I should permit myself to fall in love with this glorious girl."

Perhaps the girl divined something of what was passing through his mind, for her manner suddenly changed, and, without waiting for him to reply, she added, in a matter-of-fact tone:

"But, if you did not put that picture in the locket, Mr. Kinley, who could have done it, and why did he or she do it? It seems to me that that is as great a mystery as the mystery of my uncle's murder."

"It is part of the same mystery," declared Kinley. "I don't as yet know why

that picture was placed surreptitiously in your locket, Miss Graham, but there can be little doubt that the motive of the act was sinister. Doubtless the person who placed the picture there was either the murderer or an accessory."

"But why should the murderer seek to leave behind him such a dangerous clue to his identity?" inquired the girl. "I don't see why he should be so rash?"

"I can't see it, either—just now," replied the policeman. "But I hope to be able to solve the problem later on. This mystery is now twice as great as it was before. In addition to solving the problem of how a man could get out of a room without unlocking the door or windows, I am now confronted with the perplexing question as to how the same man managed to insert his photograph in the locket of the niece of his victim, and what was his object in so doing.

"This is one of the greatest murder cases that ever happened. And the extraordinary thing about it is, the foolish coroner and the thick-skulled central office detectives still think that it is a plain case of suicide."

"I suppose you will immediately inform them that they are wrong and tell them what you have found out?" remarked the girl.

"No, I shall do nothing of the kind. I think it will be better to allow them to go on thinking that your uncle committed suicide. The chances are that they would spoil the case and scare off the assassin if I took them into my confidence. Too many cooks spoil the broth, you know."

"Perhaps you are right," replied the girl with a sigh. "Only, I should like the whole world to know, as soon as possible, that my uncle did not die by his own hand. To commit suicide is cowardly, and I don't want anybody to have the impression that my uncle was a coward."

"Nobody will be under the impression that your uncle died by his own hand when I get through," declared Kinley confidently; "for I am going to bring the assassin to justice, Miss Graham. I feel that I shall succeed."

"I hope that you do," said the girl. "My poor dear uncle's death must be avenged, and his good name cleared. Haven't you the remotest idea as to who might have committed the murder?"

"Well, I fancy I have a good clue," replied Kinley. "It seems to me that all signs point to the fact that the assassin had an accomplice who lived or still lives under this roof. That is why, if you will pardon my referring again to the painful subject, I at first entertained suspicions against yourself."

"But what makes you think that the murderer had an accomplice here?" cried the girl. "Nobody lived in this house except my poor uncle, myself, and the servants, and I will vouch for all the latter. They have all been with us for a long time, and they are all perfectly trustworthy. They all loved their master, and would have gone through fire to serve him."

Kinley shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, all the clues already in our possession indicate that some member of this household helped the murderer to carry out his bloody work.

"That cut bell-wire, for instance. Doesn't it seem logical to suppose that that wire was cut before the assassin stole into the room? It isn't very likely that the murderer entered the colonel's room while the latter slept, and, noticing the bell-cord hanging over the bed, had enough foresight to cut the wire before stabbing his victim.

"To do so, he must have climbed upon some article of furniture in order to reach the ceiling, and in doing so he would have made enough noise to awaken his victim.

"Then, again, there is the mystery of your locket. It isn't likely that the murderer himself could have managed to put his picture inside. He must have got somebody in this house to do it for him. Who besides a member of the household would have been able to gain access to that locket?"

Miss Graham sighed.

"It certainly is a most mysterious case," she said. "Your deductions appear to be sound. It really looks as if one of the servants must have been implicated in the crime; but I really can't bring myself to suspect any one of them."

"Which one has the easiest access to your jewel-case," inquired Kinley.

"Why, Marie, my maid, of course. But I am sure Marie is an honest girl. It is ridiculous to suspect her."

"Ha!" exclaimed Kinley. "And Marie is a Frenchwoman. If I am not mistaken, Miss Graham, the original of that photograph in your locket is also a native of France. That looks like an interesting coincidence. Perhaps your maid is acquainted with this villain, and, out of love or fear, consented to put his picture in your locket in place of that of your dead friend."

"But what could have been his object in wanting to put his picture in my locket?" cried the girl.

Kinley shook his head.

"I can't even guess a reason, as yet. But nevertheless, whatever his object, it is possible that either by persuasion or threats he induced your French maid to exchange the pictures. I must interview Marie on the subject."

"But I feel sure that you are wrong, and that she is quite innocent. She has been in my service for five years, and I trust her implicitly."

"Well, sometimes one's confidence is misplaced, especially in the matter of servants," remarked Kinley. "We shall see if we can't scare Marie into confessing her part in the crime. Would you be kind enough to ring for her, Miss Graham?"

The girl was just about to press the ivory bell-button, when Kinley motioned her to stop.

"Wait, please," he said. "I have a great idea. We will try a little game on Marie. Miss Graham, do you know the combination of your uncle's safe over there?"

The girl nodded affirmatively.

"Well, in that safe is a large photograph of the man whose picture is in your locket. I saw your uncle place it there last night, after he had taken it out to show me. If you wouldn't mind opening the safe, we will take out that picture and see if we can't scare your French maid by means of it."

With a look of wonder on her face, the girl knelt down before the safe and in a minute had turned the combination.

It did not take her long to find the picture, and, as she drew it out of one of the small compartments, Kinley seized it eagerly and placed it erect on the writing-desk against the inkstand.

"Now, if you will loan me your locket," he said eagerly, "I will put it, open, on your desk, right in front of the picture. Then you will be kind enough to ring for Marie, and, when she enters the room, you will ask her to go over to the desk and bring you the locket.

"If she knows that man, she ought to be more or less startled to come suddenly face to face with his picture. I hope to be able to tell from the expression of her face just what effect the picture has on her."

Miss Graham nodded, and rang the bell.

"Tell Marie to come here at once," she commanded the butler, who responded to the summons.

A few minutes later a very pretty young woman, of a decidedly French type, made her appearance.

"You weesh to see me, *mademoiselle?*" she inquired, walking over to Miss Graham's chair.

"Yes, Marie," answered her mistress, with a slight tremor in her voice. "Kindly go over to that desk and bring me my locket. You will find it lying there."

With apparent unconcern, the maid walked over to the desk. Kinley, from where he sat, had a full front view of her face; and, as her eyes gazed at the cabinet-sized photograph near the locket, he watched her searchingly.

But, to his surprise and disappointment, she glanced at the photograph with perfect self-possession and without a sign of recognition. Taking up the locket, she brought it to her mistress, apparently quite at her ease, although there was a slightly surprised look on her pretty face, as though she secretly wondered why she had been sent for to fetch something which her mistress could have obtained by walking three steps across the room.

"Is zat all, *mademoiselle?*" she inquired.

Miss Graham glanced interrogatively at Kinley, who replied by a nod of the head.

"Yes, that is all I require just now, Marie," she said.

After the maid had departed, the girl turned eagerly to Kinley.

"Well," she exclaimed, "what opinion have you formed?"

"That I am wrong," replied the policeman with a sigh. "If facial expressions count for anything, your French maid is above suspicion. Either she has phenomenal self-control, or somebody else must have gained access to your locket."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### ONE MYSTERY SOLVED.

"But nobody else could have tampered with that locket," protested the girl. "It has not been out of my possession excepting when I dropped it and you returned it to me."

"Do you always wear it? Don't you ever leave it off?" Kinley asked.

"Sometimes; but very rarely."

"Well, on one of those occasions somebody must have gone into your room and managed to get to your jewel-case. But, wait a minute. I have an idea. On second thoughts, I'm not quite so sure that your French maid is innocent, after all."

"But you just put her to the test, didn't you?"

"Yes, but the test was not such a good one as I imagined. It is quite possible that she has never seen either that photograph or the original of it; but, nevertheless, she may have been responsible for the substitution of the picture in the locket."

"How could that be possible?"

"Well, somebody working in the interest of the man of the picture may have induced her to loan them the locket and, unknown to her, may have placed the picture inside."

"That is true," admitted Miss Graham. "Shall I call Marie back? Do you wish to question her?"

"No—not Marie. If you would be good enough to summon your late uncle's valet, I should be obliged to you, Miss Graham."

"You mean Edward. Why, what connection can he have with this mysterious case?"

"It has just occurred to me," explained Kinley, "that Edward is also a native of France. Inasmuch as the murderer appears to be French, we might reasonably expect to find his accomplice of the same nationality. Consequently it would be a good scheme, I think, to investigate Mr. Edward. He may be responsible for the insertion of the picture in the locket."

"But Edward never had access to my jewel-case," protested Miss Graham.

"He may have persuaded Marie to bring the locket to him. Being of the same race, I suppose they are pretty friendly together. I should very much like to have a talk with Edward, if you will be kind enough to summon him."

"Certainly; but I am sure you are wrong in suspecting him. He has been in my uncle's service for over ten years. He is a man of excellent character, and was very much attached to Colonel Wellers."

A few minutes later the French valet entered the library. He was a tall, serious looking man, past middle age. He had been in America so long that he spoke English with scarcely a trace of foreign accent.

"Roberts told me that you wish to see me, Miss Genevieve," he said with a bow.

"Yes, Edward. This gentleman wishes to have a talk with you. You will please answer his questions without reserve."

The valet turned toward Kinley with another low bow.

"First of all, my friend," began the latter, "would you mind going over to that desk and bringing me a photograph you will find standing against the inkwell?"

The valet stepped across the room to the desk and brought back the picture without betraying the slightest emotion.

"Of course you recognize this photograph?" remarked Kinley, in a matter-of-fact tone, as he took the picture from the valet. "You have met this man in the flesh, have you not?"

"No, sir," answered Edward, looking the policeman squarely in the eye. "I can't say that I have. I have never seen this portrait before, and I don't think I have ever met the original."

"But you know who he is, eh?" suggested Kinley, taking care to conceal his disappointment.

"No, sir. I can't say that I do. The gentleman is a perfect stranger to me."

Kinley gazed searchingly into the fellow's face. There was not the slightest hint of deceit written there.

"Have you ever seen this locket before, my man?" the policeman asked abruptly, taking the trinket from the table and holding it before the valet's eyes.

"Oh, yes, sir. If I am not mistaken, it is the locket I have often seen Miss Genevieve wearing."

"Exactly. And you have also seen it when Miss Genevieve wasn't wearing it, haven't you?" inquired Kinley with an elaborate air of carelessness.

"No, sir, I have not, except once when—" He stopped abruptly, and Kinley observed that his face had turned fiery red and that he appeared to be greatly agitated.

"Except once, when—what? Come, my man, finish the sentence," commanded Kinley sternly.

The valet turned appealingly to Miss Graham.

"If you please, miss, I'd rather not say any more about that," he faltered. "Won't you please excuse me?"

"You must answer this gentleman's questions, Edward," said the girl firmly.

"But it was a slip of the tongue, miss. It wouldn't be honorable for me to tell; for I am afraid it will get some one into trouble."

"Nevertheless, you must tell, Edward," repeated Miss Graham. "This gentleman is an officer of the law, and you must not conceal anything from him. As a favor to me, I request that you tell us on what occasion you saw that locket when I was not wearing it."

The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders resignedly.

"Very well, I will tell," he said with a sigh. "But, please, Miss Genevieve, do not punish Marie, for I am sure she meant no harm, and I should hate to think that it was I who got her into trouble. It was about six weeks ago. I took Marie to the French Students' Ball, and she wore your locket."

"Ha!" exclaimed Kinley triumphantly.

Miss Graham said nothing, but there was a look of mingled surprise and distress on her face.

"It was very, very foolish of Marie," went on the valet; "but I am sure she meant no harm. She wished to present a gay appearance at the ball, so as to look like one of the grand ladies. I recognized the locket, and told her that she did wrong to wear it. She said she intended to replace it in your jewel-case when she returned home, and that you would never be the wiser."

"Miss Graham," cried Kinley excitedly, "we are on the right track at last. Will you please ring for Marie to come here at once?"

The girl summoned the butler, and sent him in search of the French maid.

When the latter entered the room, she looked a little startled as her eyes fell, first upon the locket in Kinley's hand, and then upon the distressed face of the valet.

Apparently, she realized at a glance what had occurred and guessed why she had been summoned.

"Marie," began Kinley gently, "we know now that you borrowed your mistress's locket to go to the ball six weeks ago. In doing so, you, of course, took an unpardonable liberty; but Miss Genevieve is willing to overlook it entirely if you will answer a few questions."

The maid turned to her mistress with tears in her eyes.

"Oh, *mademoiselle,*" she cried, "I am so veree sorry. I know zat it was wrong of me to borrow zee beautiful locket; but you were not wearing eet zat evening, and I yielded to zee temptation. I am so veree ashamed. I know zat you will nevaire trust me again."

"Yes, I will," said Miss Graham gently. "As this gentleman says, I will overlook the matter this once, Marie, if you will truthfully answer a few questions he wishes to ask."

"*Mais oui, mademoiselle,*" cried the distressed maid eagerly. "I will do anything to show how veree sorry I am. I svear I will tell zee truth."

"Very good," remarked Kinley, taking up the large photograph from the table. "First of all, tell me if you met this man at the ball that night."

The girl glanced at the picture.

"No, *monsieur.* I am sure I did not meet him. I don't think I have evaire seen that man."

"Well, how many strangers did you dance with that night?" went on the policeman.

"I danced with no strangers, *monsieur*. Edward, here, took me to zee ball, and he vill tell you zat I danced only with heem all zee time."

"But you showed that locket to somebody? Come, now, think carefully before you answer," commanded Kinley sharply. "Didn't somebody besides Edward and yourself handle that locket that night?"

"No, *monsieur*. Nobody touched it, I am sure of zat."

"Then you mean to tell us that it did not leave your hands from the moment you took it from your mistress's jewel-case until the time you deposited it there again?"

For reply the girl burst out sobbing and threw herself on her knees beside Miss Graham's chair.

"Oh, *mademoiselle,* forgive me," she cried, "I tink I know vat zee gentleman mean, and I vill tell all zee truth, even though it ruin me.

"On our way home from zee ball zee beautiful locket broke. It caught in my lace sleeve, and zee little ring which fastens it to zee chain broke clean off. I vas so veree scared. Zee next morning I take zee locket to a jeweler and pay to have heem fixed it out of my own money. Please, don't be angry."

Kinley jumped to his feet excitedly.

"You took it to a jeweler, eh?" he cried. "Miss Graham, we are hot on the scent. Quick, girl! Tell me the name and address of that jeweler. Answer me truthfully, and you will be fully forgiven for borrowing that locket."

"Eet vas a jeweler and vatch repairer who keeps a leetle shop on Sixth Avenue, near Twentieth Street. His name, I think, ees M. Gannon," replied the girl, regarding the excited policeman with open-eyed amazement.

"And you told this man that the locket belonged to Miss Genevieve, eh?" demanded Kinley.

The girl nodded.

"*Oui, monsieur,* I told heem zat. I explain to heem my predicament, and I beg heem to make a good job of eet, so that *mademoiselle* would nevaire know zat zee locket had been broken."

Kinley impulsively seized the photograph from the table and put it in his coat-pocket. Then he snatched up his hat.

"I will bid you good-by now, Miss Graham," he said. "I will return here to-morrow and report progress. I believe that Marie has told us the truth, and I must interview this jeweler at once."

He found Gannon's jewelry-shop on Sixth Avenue without much trouble, but was disappointed to discover that it was closed for the night.

By consulting a city directory, however, he ascertained where the jeweler lived; and although the address given was up in Harlem, he was so eager to strike while the iron was hot that he jumped on a car and proceeded there at once.

When he rang the bell of Gannon's apartment, the door was opened by the jeweler himself.

The latter was a little dazed at the sight of Kinley's uniform, and still more startled at the first words the policeman said to him.

"Mr. Gannon," began Kinley, "about six weeks ago you repaired a locket belonging to Miss Genevieve Graham, of Fifth Avenue, and brought there by her French maid. Do you remember the job?"

"Certainly, I remember it perfectly. The poor girl was in a terrible state of mind because she had borrowed her mistress's locket without asking leave, and while in her possession the locket broke.

"She stood in my store wringing her hands and uttering loud lamentations, after the manner of her race; but she went away much comforted when I assured her that I could fix the locket so that her mistress would never detect the break. But what's the matter? Why have you come to inquire about the locket? Is anything wrong?"

"Mr. Gannon," went on the policeman, "while that locket was in your possession, you took the liberty of inserting therein a miniature photograph. I have ample proofs to that effect, so, of course, you will not attempt to deny it."

"I certainly shall deny it," retorted the jeweler with much heat. "Why, I don't even know what you are talking

about, officer. I didn't insert any picture in the locket. What do you mean?"

For reply, Kinley drew from his pocket the cabinet-sized photograph of the mysterious foreigner.

"Take a look at this picture, Mr. Gannon," he said. "I believe you know this man."

The jeweler glanced at the portrait and uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Why, yes," he said, "I believe I do know him. He's slightly changed since that picture was taken. He must have sat for it at least ten years ago; but, nevertheless, there's a resemblance which is unmistakable."

"Ha!" exclaimed Kinley excitedly. "And who is he, my friend?"

"Why, it seems to be the photograph of a Frenchman named Réné Speck, working in my shop as my assistant for the past few months. As I said, this picture must have been taken at least ten years ago. He's much older looking now, but the features are undoubtedly the same."

"And was this fellow working in your shop on the day that Miss Graham's maid came in with the locket?"

"Yes, he was. In fact, I handed the job over to him. It was he who repaired the trinket. He is an expert workman; in fact, the best assistant I have ever had."

"Tell me all you know about this man," cried Kinley eagerly.

"I'm sorry to say I don't know very much. He came into my store a few months ago, looking for a job. He didn't tell me very much about himself. He merely said that he had just come over from France, and that he was an expert watch-repairer and diamond-setter.

"As I was in pressing need of an assistant, I gave him a trial, and he made good. He was a man about fifty years of age, I should judge, and very taciturn. He never spoke unless spoken to, and then he answered in as few words as possible. Consequently, I didn't get an opportunity to learn much about him."

"And where is he now?" inquired Kinley, making a desperate effort to appear calm.

"I can't tell you. He didn't come down to work yesterday. I sent the boy around to the place where he boarded to find out what was the reason for his absence, and the landlady sent back word that he had packed his trunk, paid his bills, and gone."

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### ANOTHER MYSTERY SOLVED.

KINLEY'S face glowed as he left the jeweler's home.

He had good cause to feel elated. His visit to Mr. Gannon had proved eminently successful.

In addition to having ascertained the assassin's name—or, at least, his alias—and the fact that he was an expert watch-repairer, he had solved the mystery of how the photograph of the mysterious Frenchman came to be in the locket.

Undoubtedly the fellow, as he sat at Gannon's work-bench, had overheard the excited French maid telling the jeweler that the locket was the property of her mistress, Miss Genevieve Graham.

Either he had known at the time, or had afterward learned, that Miss Graham was the niece of his hated enemy, Colonel Wellers, and while the locket was in his hands he had taken out the picture it contained and inserted in its place his own photograph.

But although Kinley could not help feeling elated at his success in having cleared up this part of the mystery, he did not fail to realize that the greater part of his task still confronted him.

First, why had this mysterious Frenchman placed the photograph in the locket? What had been his object in so doing?

And, second, and most baffling mystery of all, how had this same mysterious Frenchman managed to break into Colonel Wellers's mansion, murder the colonel, and go out of his victim's bedroom, leaving the door locked behind him and the key on the inside?

"It looks as if I shall not be able to learn the answer to either of those problems until I have caught the villainous Frenchman and wrung a confession out of him," Kinley muttered. "That he did both these things I am now positive. But why he did the first and how he accomplished the second, I can't for the

life of me imagine. Unless I can catch him and make him explain, I am afraid these mysteries will remain forever unsolved."

The next place he visited was the boarding-house where the Frenchman had lived while working at Gannon's.

The jeweler had furnished him the address, and he went there in the hope that the landlady might be able to give him some further information about the personality of the man he sought.

But the latter, although quite willing to impart all she knew, could not tell him much of any value.

The Frenchman, apparently, had been as taciturn and mysterious in his lodging-house as he had been at Gannon's store.

According to the landlady, he had come to the boarding-house a few months previously, had paid his board regularly, never had any visitors, and never received any mail. That was all the good woman could tell about him, except that he kept late hours at night, often going out after supper and not returning until three or four the next morning; but what he did or where he went during those hours she had no idea.

Satisfied that there was no more to be learned at this place, Kinley thanked the landlady and returned to his own boarding-house.

He was very tired, and, feeling that he could not accomplish much that night, resolved to go to bed and sleep over it.

He climbed the stairs to his room and locked the door, leaving the key in the lock, as was his custom.

Then he took off his uniform, and was about to retire, when he heard somebody trying the street-door down-stairs.

His nerves had been set on edge by the exciting experiences he had been through that day; and although it was not very late at night, his first thought was that the noise was caused by burglars.

As he heard the street-door open and then bang shut, he grasped his revolver and began to dress himself again, with the intention of going down-stairs and confronting the intruder.

But a second later he was reassured and laughed at his own fears. He heard the sound of somebody stumbling up the stairs and a drunken voice making desperate efforts to sing "What's the Matter with the Moon To-Night?" in utter disregard of the feelings of the household.

Kinley recognized the voice as belonging to a somewhat flashy youth named Mitchell, who occupied a room on the top floor, and because of his dissolute habits had been given a "week's notice" by the landlady.

Kinley heard the young man stagger laboriously up the two flights of stairs. As he was passing Kinley's room, he apparently lost his balance and fell heavily against the door.

"Hi, there!" cried Kinley from within. "What are you trying to do? Do you want to break down this door?"

The drunken youth mumbled an incoherent apology, picked himself up, and continued his perilous ascent of the stairs.

Kinley chuckled; but suddenly the smile disappeared from his features, he rushed excitedly toward the closed door, and falling on his knees, gazed intently at the key in the lock.

There didn't seem to be anything about that key to account for his excitement unless it was the fact that in falling heavily against the door, the drunken youth had half shaken the key from the lock, so that it now hung from the keyhole in an almost vertical position.

And yet Kinley was intensely excited.

"By Jove!" he gasped, "I do believe I've hit it right. That drunken fool outside has shown me the light. I think I've solved the mystery of how that Frenchman got out of Colonel Wellers's room, leaving the door locked behind him and the key on the inside of the lock."

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## CHAPTER XV.

### AN INGENIOUS TRICK.

KINLEY was so excited by the discovery he had made that he could not sleep a wink that night.

He passed most of the time in a rocking-chair, smoking big black cigars and impatiently awaiting the arrival of breakfast.

This, however, was not because he

felt the need of a breakfast, for when the hour for that meal finally did arrive, he left the house without even waiting to partake of a cup of coffee and hurried to the home of Miss Genevieve Graham.

That young lady was an early riser, and although it was scarcely nine o'clock when Kinley was announced, she was already up and sent down word that she would see him at once in the library.

"I must apologize for making such an early call," explained Kinley, "but the fact is, Miss Graham, I must report for duty at the station-house at ten, and I thought I would drop in, on my way there, and let you know what progress I am making in your uncle's case."

"That is very good of you," replied the girl. "I can see by your face that you have something important to tell me. Did that jeweler give you some valuable information? Have you discovered who put that picture in my locket? Please tell me all about it."

Kinley smiled.

"Yes, I know who put that picture in the locket," he replied. "I have discovered that the original of the photograph placed it there himself."

"But how did he manage to get possession of the locket?" gasped the girl.

"In the easiest way possible," replied Kinley with a smile. "The murderer of your uncle, Miss Graham, happens to be an expert watch and jewelry repairer. He chanced to be employed as a workman in the shop of Mr. Gannon when Marie, your maid, entered and excitedly told the jeweler that she had broken your locket and wished to have it fixed.

"The job was handed over to this mysterious Frenchman, who took the opportunity of taking the photograph of your girl friend from the locket and putting his own there instead."

"How very extraordinary! What could have been his object in so doing? Have you managed to find that out yet?"

"No. That mystery still remains unsolved; but I have solved an ever greater one," answered Kinley proudly. "I am now able to explain to you, Miss Graham, how your uncle's assassin managed to get out of that room, leaving behind him a locked door with the key on the inside of the lock."

"Good Heavens!" gasped the girl. "Have you discovered a secret panel in the wall?"

"No. The murderer didn't make his exit by means of any secret panel. He passed out through the doorway in the conventional manner."

"But that is impossible," protested Miss Graham. "He couldn't have gone through the door and then locked it on the inside, after him. The servants swear that they found the door locked and the key on the inside."

"And your servants are telling the truth," replied Kinley with a smile. "They *did* find the door locked and the key in the lock; but, nevertheless, the murderer got out by means of that door. Until last night, Miss Graham, I, too, thought that the feat was a physical impossibility; but now I know how it was done—or at least, to be more accurate, I should say that I now know how it could have been done."

"How?" demanded the girl with breathless eagerness.

For reply, the policeman took from his pocket a bunch of keys. From the bunch he selected a large one.

It was a very ordinary-looking door-key. From its lower end, at right angles, projected the usual little square tongue—the part of the key which goes into the keyhole and operates the lock.

Kinley pointed to this particular part of the key.

"You see that hump, Miss Graham?" he said. "Well, that little square piece of metal explains how the trick was done."

"Is that the key of my uncle's room?" inquired the girl.

"No, but the key up-stairs is very similar. They are both the ordinary type of key, with the little tongue projecting at right angles from the business end. I am simply using this key here to illustrate. Now, this is what I believe actually occurred up-stairs.

"When Colonel Wellers retired, he locked his bedroom door and left the key in the lock, satisfied that by so doing he was safe from intruders.

"Now, perhaps the assassin had already entered the room before the colonel got there and was hiding under the bed. This suggestion presents itself,

because, in that event, the fellow would have had time to notice that bell-cord, and to have cut the wire before the colonel entered the room.

"But if he was not already in the room, he must have pushed the key out of the lock and let himself in with a skeleton-key while the colonel was sleeping. Then he must have crept into the room, cut that bell-wire, and murdered the poor old gentleman.

"This done, the cunning wretch tried to arrange things so that the crime would look like a case of suicide instead of murder. He pulled the dead or dying man's arm into position so that the lifeless fingers grasped the hilt of the dagger. Then he crept to the door and placed the key on the inside keyhole. This was where he showed his cunning. He did not place the key in the keyhole in the ordinary way. He put it there so that it hung downward from the hole by the little projecting piece on the end. It hung there so lightly that if anybody pounded on the outside of the door the key was bound to become dislodged and drop to the floor.

"This was exactly the effect the cunning scoundrel desired to produce. He knew that, later, the household would become alarmed at their inability to arouse the colonel and would decide to break in the door.

"He figured out that when they started to do so, they would shake the key to the floor, which would give them the impression that the key had been in the lock in the regular way, and that the colonel must have locked himself in his room and committed suicide.

"Well, having arranged the key in the keyhole in this fashion, the assassin stole out of the room, carefully closing the door behind him. This is how the trick was done, Miss Graham."

"But I don't quite understand," persisted the girl. "The servants say that they found the door really locked. If he left the key hanging from the inside keyhole, how did he manage to lock the door after him?"

"Easily," replied Kinley. "After leaving the room, he locked the door from the outside with a skeleton-key. This he could do because, while to anybody peering through the keyhole the inside key appeared to be in the lock, in the regular way, it was not really in far enough to prevent the insertion and use of a second key in the outside keyhole.

"When your butler, suspecting that something was wrong, peered through the keyhole, he fancied he could see the end of the key in the lock, whereas what he really saw was this little square piece of the key by which it hung downward from the keyhole.

"It was a clever plan, and it worked out just as the scoundrel expected. The butler broke in the door, heard the key fall to the floor in so doing, and naturally at once concluded that the colonel must have locked the door and left the key in the lock.

"All of us, in fact, thought the same thing. Until late last night, I was ready to swear that the assassin could not have left the room by that locked door—that he must have found some other way out."

"And how did you manage to find the solution of the mystery?" inquired Miss Graham with a look of great interest on her face.

"In a somewhat remarkable manner. I had retired for the night, and one of the boarders — I live in a boarding-house, you know—came home intoxicated.

"In passing my room he staggered and fell heavily against my door. In so doing he dislodged the key from the lock, causing it to half-hang from the keyhole. As soon as my eyes rested on the position of the key, the thought came to me like a flash that that is how your uncle's assassin could have worked the trick."

"It was very clever of you," declared the girl, with frank admiration in her eyes. "You certainly have made great headway in this case. You have solved everything now, except the mystery of the photograph. We still have to learn why that scoundrel saw fit to put his picture in my locket."

"I'm afraid I sha'n't be able to solve that problem until I have caught the murderer and forced an explanation from him," said Kinley with a sigh.

"And do you really think that you will succeed in catching him?" cried the

girl eagerly. "Oh, I would gladly spend my last cent to bring that wretch to justice and avenge my poor uncle. If you succeed in catching that cowardly villain, Mr. Kinley, you will earn my undying gratitude."

"I am going to do it—if it takes me twenty years," replied the policeman with grim determination.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### CAUGHT.

When Kinley reported at the substation of the traffic squad that morning, he was assigned to do patrol duty on foot along the river-front.

A strike among the longshoremen was threatened hourly, and the inspector in command of the traffic squad detailed six of his men to patrol the water-front, and prevent any disorder which might arise when the strike was formally declared.

Kinley happened to be one of the six selected, and he greatly rejoiced that such was the case, for on his way to the station-house an idea had occurred to him, and this assignment gave him an opportunity to carry it out.

This idea was based upon the supposition that the assassin of Colonel Wellers would not remain in New York.

It seemed logical to assume that the murderer would leave the United States at the first opportunity, and, being a Frenchman, it was likely that he would return to his own country.

Now, Kinley was acquainted with the captain of La Cigale, one of the steamships of the French line, and it occurred to him that it would be a good plan to go to this captain, give him the photograph of the colonel's assassin, and request him to communicate with the Paris police when his ship reached the other side, and ask them to institute a search for the fugitive.

He knew that La Cigale happened to be in port just then, and was to sail on the morrow.

This assignment along the water-front was, therefore, a rare piece of luck. It would give him a chance to see his friend the captain without having to wait until the end of the day.

As soon as he reached the river, therefore, he went to the dock of the French line and, handing his card to one of the crew, requested the fellow to take it to the captain.

The latter came out as soon as he read the name on the card.

He had known Kinley in the days when the latter was a man of wealth, and now was greatly surprised to find him wearing the uniform of a New York policeman.

"My dear friend," he cried, "I am delighted to see you again. But if you will pardon me for saying so, I am astonished to see you in such an attire. Surely it is a joke, eh? You are masquerading in that uniform, is it not so?"

"Not at all," Kinley assured him. "I am a full-fledged cop."

And he proceeded to explain how he had quarreled with his family and come penniless to New York to earn his own living.

"And I want you to help me, old man," he went on. "I want you to do me a great favor. I am now working on a big case. I am looking for one of your own countrymen. If I can lay hands on him, it will mean fame and promotion for me."

The captain assured him that he would be glad to give him any assistance he could.

"I have an idea that this fellow will return to France," Kinley explained. "I want you to go to the police there and ask them to keep a sharp lookout for him. He is wanted here for murder."

"Ha! And if our police find him, I suppose you want them to notify the New York police department, eh?"

"No," replied Kinley hastily, "I don't. I don't mind telling you in confidence that I am following this case on my own hook. I don't want headquarters to know anything about it until I have the prisoner under arrest.

"Can't you arrange it with the police over there so that, if they find him, they will cable me at once, and keep the fellow under close and constant surveillance until they hear from me."

"Yes, I think I can do that. I have friends in the police department on the other side. Of course, you will give me a description of this man."

"I will do better than that," replied Kinley with a smile. "I will give you his photograph. I am lucky enough to have one in my possession. I believe it was taken ten years ago; but I understand he is still very much like the picture. Here it is."

He took the photograph from his pocket and handed it to the captain.

The latter glanced at it and uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Do you know him?" cried Kinley eagerly, noting the captain's agitation.

"Know him? *Mon Dieu!* I should say I did. He—he is on my ship now."

"On your ship!" gasped Kinley, turning pale with surprise and excitement. "Are you serious?"

"Perfectly. My friend, you are in great luck. This fellow is now on my ship, and you can lay hands on him any minute you want to."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Kinley. "This sounds too good to be true. Take me to him at once. Is he a passenger?"

"No. He is one of the stewards. He shipped yesterday. One of our stewards deserted, and when this fellow came to us and asked for a job, we took him, being short-handed."

"Take me on board at once," urged Kinley, trembling with excitement. "I don't want to lose a minute. This fellow is as slippery as an eel. Already he may have got wind of my errand and managed to make his escape."

"I don't think so," replied the captain. "He was on the ship all right a few minutes ago. Come with me."

A few minutes later Kinley had slipped the handcuffs on a struggling, cursing Frenchman who wore the uniform of a steward but whose face was unmistakably the original of the photograph in Miss Graham's locket.

"Réné Speck, or whatever your real name is," cried the policeman excitedly, "I arrest you for the murder of Colonel Maxim Wellers. You will come with me to police headquarters."

## CHAPTER XVII.

### KINLEY EXPLAINS.

A WEEK later, Kinley rang the front door-bell of the Wellers mansion.

"Is Miss Graham at home?" he inquired of the butler.

"Yes, sir, she is. Step inside, sir, and I'll tell 'er that you are 'ere. She left horders that she's always at 'ome when you call, sir—except when she's really hout."

This latter piece of information was imparted in a confidential tone. The smile on the policeman's face broadened as he heard it.

"Hif you'll hexcuse my remarking hit, sir," went on the butler, "that was a jolly clever piece of work you did in catching the poor master's murderer so quick. We ain't done talking about it yet, sir, in the servants' 'all."

Kinley blushingly bowed his acknowledgment of this compliment. The butler's unusually deferential manner was even a greater tribute than his words.

Kinley had only seen Miss Graham once since he had arrested her uncle's murderer. He had paid her a visit on that day to tell her the good news; but since then he had kept away from the house for reasons of his own.

Now she reproached him for his neglect.

"I have been expecting you all the week," she said. "It was unkind of you to stay away when—when I have been so anxious to hear about that wretched man. I have had to rely upon the newspapers and upon the reporters who call at the house for information concerning him. Have you brought me any news? Does he still maintain that stubborn attitude of silence, or has he confessed?"

"He has confessed," replied Kinley. "That is why I have come here to-day, Miss Graham. For the past week I have had no real news to bring you. The prisoner, since the day of his arrest, has steadfastly refused to say a word. To-day, however, we managed to break his iron will, and he has told us everything."

"Then you now can tell me why he killed my poor uncle, and why he placed his horrid picture in my locket."

"Yes; I can explain everything, and I am here to do so.

"To begin with, the prisoner's real name is Henri Daudet, of Calais, France. He hated your uncle because, eleven years ago, Colonel Wellers, who

was over in France at the time, had him sent to prison for ten years. Perhaps you remember that occurrence?"

The girl shook her head.

"No. I remember that we spent the summer in France, about eleven years ago; but I don't remember my uncle having trouble with any Frenchman. However, I was only a little girl at the time, so it is, of course, quite likely that the thing happened without my having any knowledge of it."

"Well, the colonel was instrumental in having this fellow sent to prison, and on the day he was sentenced the wretch swore in court that he would murder your uncle as soon as he got out.

"The colonel knew enough of the man to realize that he would keep his vow, if he could manage it, and that is why, when he heard a few months ago that Daudet had served his term of imprisonment and was a free man, your unfortunate uncle knew that his life was in danger, and went about in constant fear of assassination.

"The prisoner has confessed that he came over to this country with the sole object of avenging himself on the man he hated. He has told us that he got a job with Gannon, the jeweler, so as to be in the neighborhood of the colonel's residence.

"He has confessed that he made one other attempt to kill your uncle—an attempt which failed. You remember, Miss Graham, that on the day before the murder, your carriage-horses took fright and bolted while you and the colonel were riding on Fifth Avenue?"

"Yes. Of course I remember it. That was the day you saved our lives by heroically stopping the runaways," exclaimed the girl.

"Well, the prisoner has confessed that it was he who caused those horses to bolt. He threw snuff in their nostrils, hoping that they would run away, and that the colonel would be dashed to death."

"Good Heavens!" gasped the girl, her eyes distended with horror. "What a conscienceless scoundrel he must be! But how could he have done that without being seen and recognized by my poor uncle?"

"Your uncle didn't recognize him, because the villain was disguised by means of a red wig and a false mustache. Your uncle, however, did suspect that the runaway was not an accident, but a deliberate attempt upon his life. He told me as much the evening before he was murdered."

"And the picture in the locket?" exclaimed the girl with a shudder. "You say this man has explained why he put it there?"

"Yes. He told us that that was an idea which occurred to him suddenly when your maid Marie came into Gannon's jewelry-store and tearfully presented the locket to be repaired, exclaiming that the trinket was the property of her mistress—Miss Genevieve Graham. He says that when he heard the maid say that, he realized at once that the locket belonged to the niece of the man he hated.

"It then occurred to the cunning wretch that, sooner or later, you would have occasion to open the locket. He also figured out that as soon as you saw the strange picture in your locket you would take it to your uncle and enlist the latter's help in solving the puzzle. He knew that when the colonel saw the picture he would recognize it as the portrait of the man who had sworn to kill him.

"The cowardly wretch desired to make the poor old man suffer as much as possible, and there is no doubt that if the colonel had seen that picture in your locket, he would have been worried almost to death by its mysterious presence there. That is the secret of the picture in the locket, Miss Graham."

"Good Heavens!" gasped the girl. "How horrible. I didn't think there were such wicked men in the world."

"Well, this one won't be in the world much longer," remarked Kinley grimly. "Now that he has confessed, he is bound to go to the electric chair. Your uncle's fate will be fully avenged, Miss Graham."

"And I shall never be able to thank you enough for bringing it about," cried the girl. "I don't think that I am usually of a vengeful disposition, but there is no mercy in my heart for that wretch. He killed my poor dear uncle, and he deserves to die. By bringing him to jus-

tice, you have earned my undying gratitude."

Kinley murmured something about having done only his duty under the circumstances.

"And besides," he added, "I have also had the extreme satisfaction of witnessing the great discomfiture and chagrin of a fussy little Teutonic coroner and two extremely haughty Central Office detectives. They are all very much perturbed at being forced to admit that they were wrong, and that their suicide theory was erroneous."

"And I suppose you have earned promotion in the police department by your clever work, eh?" inquired the girl eagerly.

Kinley smiled.

"On the contrary," he answered, "I have resigned from the department. That is why I have come here to-day dressed in the clothes of an ordinary citizen."

"Resigned from the department!" exclaimed the girl in great surprise. "Would you mind telling me why, Mr. Kinley?"

"Well, when your unfortunate uncle offered me a job as his personal bodyguard, and I accepted the offer, I wrote out my resignation and sent it to the police commissioner. Afterward, I completely forgot that I had done so, until after I had established my theory and captured the murderer.

"Then the police commissioner sent for me, congratulated me on my work, told me with a smile that he had just decided to accept my resignation, but that, under the circumstances, he was going to ask me to withdraw it, and to accept a position as a detective-sergeant at more than double the pay I was then receiving."

"And you refused the offer?" exclaimed the girl with a look of wonder on her face.

"Yes. I declined it with profuse thanks. I explained to the commissioner that the reason I had entered the police department in the first place was because I had quarreled with my folks in Kentucky and had come to New York to earn my own living.

"On the day I arrested the murderer I received a letter from my father. It was a very affectionate, forgiving letter, and as soon as I read it I made up my mind to return home as soon as possible."

"I am so very glad," said the girl softly. "I mean, of course, that I am glad that you have become reconciled with your family. And so you are going back to Kentucky. I suppose you will return to New York—some day?"

Kinley looked into her beautiful eyes for a full half minute.

"Yes," he replied with much emphasis, "I certainly shall return to New York, some day."

THE END.

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# RED AND BLACK ON WHITE.

By MARIE B. SCHRADER.

How a clumsy accident caused a backward lawyer to make an impulsive avowal.

ROBERT FORBES glanced at his watch. It was drawing near the usual time of leaving the office, but he had not finished the day's work, so he dismissed all thought of departure.

As he looked out of his windows, twenty stories in the air, and thought of the smallness of all things beneath him, his mind reverted to Margaret Richmond, and he compared her with the huge tower which reared its fifty odd sections haughtily in the face of all New York.

There it stood—the emblem of wealth and unattainableness to the average man. She was as far above and away from him as that wonderful building.

He had loved her ten years, and they were long years, too. No one but himself would ever know how interminable they had seemed. When first he met her at her début he had said to himself,

"The one girl in the whole world," and he meant it.

Time had come and gone with few changes for him. When he had bowed before her that day when she stood all in white with a bouquet of white roses in her hand, he had formed a mental resolve that some day she should stand beside him again in white with orange-blossoms in her hair. But time had slipped by, and he seemed no nearer his goal than he had been that first day.

Suitors she had had in abundance, and he wondered why she never selected one of them.

"I'm going to be an old maid," she would answer laughingly when he expressed surprise that she refused one excellent offer after another. "I shall never marry, unless I can give my whole heart to my husband. Marriage is too sacred a thing to mar it through a consideration of mere social advantages to be gained."

Forbes admired her views. They were exactly what he would expect of her, but the question that was nearest his lips remained unspoken.

He didn't dare put his fate to the test under his present financial circumstances. He was ever waiting for promotion. To ask a girl of her beauty, attractiveness, and fortune to marry him was something he couldn't think of for a moment.

If, by some strange turn of luck, he might be made a senior partner in the firm of Brown & Hurlbut, that fact—together with the pronounced increase of salary — would enable him to put the long-delayed question to his divinity. But there were no immediate prospects of this.

Brown had several times asked him when he expected to marry, and he had answered with the one word, "Never."

Once more Forbes turned his attention to the paper before him.

At this moment the office-boy entered with a card.

Forbes glanced at it and said doubtfully, "I'm very busy."

"He says it's important that he see you at once, sir," explained the boy.

"Oh, show him in, then."

"Now, what can he want that is so urgent?" meditated Forbes, while the office-boy went out into the reception-room.

He looked at the card again, and remembered having met James MacGowan several times while calling at Margaret Richmond's. He knew little about him beyond the fact that he was in the real-estate business; that, like himself, he hadn't much money, and accordingly was continually interesting himself in new ideas, in the hope of luring elusive Fortune into a speaking acquaintance.

Forbes well understood those struggles. He was himself always on the lookout for some chance method of becoming rich unexpectedly. No plausible scheme was permitted to pass by without an investigation on his part. Each time that an investment proved disastrous he made a firm resolution that it would be his last; then along came another promising one, and he busied himself in devising ways by which to collect the necessary funds by which to make one more hazard.

He had become almost superstitious about letting any "get-rich-quick" scheme escape his attention.

MacGowan knew this, and that was the reason why he ventured to call on Forbes.

"I understand you are looking for an investment, Mr. Forbes," he began, after the formalities had been exchanged.

"Well, I am not doing so just at present," answered Forbes, who had squandered his last spare hundreds only a few weeks before on a scheme which had promised well.

The loss of so much money had thrown him back considerably, and he had determined to be more careful in the future.

"But this proposition I am going to make you is a sure thing," continued MacGowan.

"They are all sure things," commented Forbes bitterly.

"But this one can't fail," persisted MacGowan. "There are millions in it. You and I will share the money. Think of it! You can have a law firm of your own. All a man needs in this day and generation is money."

"That's true," murmured Forbes half to himself.

"With money," continued MacGowan,

appreciating the fact that he had struck the proper key-note, "a man can do anything he wants to do. You are a man of ability; but you lack money — and there you are!"

Forbes knew all this before MacGowan called. He had thought of it for ten years, and he hadn't given up hope. But the subject was ever new and interesting.

"Well, what is your plan?" he said.

"Can you get hold of two hundred dollars this afternoon?" asked MacGowan.

"Good Heavens, man, it's four now. All the banks are closed. I wouldn't know where else to go for it. Why do you want two hundred dollars?"

The brief was forgotten. All law business stopped while Forbes listened to the unfolding of a scheme whereby cream could be separated from milk at a cost so low that the company would pocket immense profits.

"I can't go ahead with it unless I have the two hundred to-day," said MacGowan. "I haven't it myself," he added frankly, "and, somehow, I thought of you. I have heard that you, too, are looking for a good thing."

Then he went on to explain all the reasons why it was imperative that he have the money immediately.

Forbes, skeptical at first, became intensely interested. Once he formed an opinion, he didn't hesitate long in making up his mind as to the best thing to do. He was a man of impulse, with the courage of his convictions.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed enthusiastically, "I believe you've struck an excellent idea."

He listened attentively to all the details of the plan.

"I think it will make a pile of money. I would like to go in on it, but don't really see how it is possible, as my funds are tied up. If you could give me a few days, I might be able to get the necessary two hundred."

"That would be too late," said MacGowan. "If you can't get the money at once, I will hustle and find some one who can. I must have it to-day."

He reached for his hat and cane; and was about to leave, when Forbes laid a detaining hand on his arm.

"Wait a moment," he said. "Let me think. There's Burbank. No, he won't do. He put his spare money in sugar yesterday. There's Collins. No, nothing to be had from him. Stop! I have it. I know where I can get it."

"Are you sure?" anxiously inquired MacGowan.

"Absolutely," answered Forbes. "Come back later, and I will have it. It's a great idea."

"Thought you would like it," said MacGowan, with a sigh of satisfaction as he opened the door and went out.

Life seemed to take on a rosy aspect for Forbes, now that some real money was in sight. His salary was of fair size, but it was continually consumed by the demands of his family.

He had a mother and sisters to support, and he willingly gave them every cent he could spare. He did it without a murmur, because he loved them. Thoughts of their comfort now flitted through his brain. What added luxuries unlimited means would bring to them! He would settle so much on his family, and then—after that, he would go to her and learn his answer to the long-delayed question.

"Where is my pad?" he muttered, as he searched for paper on which to write his request for two hundred. "Miller can let me have it. Ah, here it is!"

He placed the tablet before him, took up his pen, and mechanically dipped it in the ink-well. Then he started to write, but his pen scratched noisily along the white surface.

"What the deuce is the matter with this pen?" he asked aloud, in annoyance.

He laughed as he made the discovery that there was barely enough ink in the stand with which to write his note. He put it down and lifted its companion, which was always full of red ink. That, too, was empty.

"That boy!" he ejaculated, as he pressed a near-by button.

In answer to his summons, a sleepy-looking office-boy entered the room. He said nothing, but stood still in the middle of the floor, waiting for orders.

One edge of a paper-backed book thrust its well-worn edges from a hip-pocket. Forbes's keen eye fell upon it.

"Now, Ben, what have I told you?" he said, pointing accusingly at the pocket decoration. "Why will you poison yourself with such rot? Don't you know that every book of that kind takes away just so much of your intelligence?"

"Yes, sir; so you say," answered Ben amiably.

"Well, why do you read such stuff, then? You are getting very careless of late. Perhaps those books have something to do with it. What do you mean by not filling my ink-wells? How do you expect me to write without ink?

"As soon as I finish this note, I want you to deliver it at once. It's very important. Wait for an answer. And as you go out, you can save yourself another trip by taking these ink-wells with you. Put the note in your pocket, or you'll lose it. Now, hurry! You should deliver the note and be back here within twenty minutes. Remember, Mr. Miller's office is only around the block, and I know just how far you have to go."

"Yes, sir," said Ben, as Forbes finished the note and handed it to him.

He placed it carefully in his pocket, as directed. Forbes then deposited an ink-well in each of Ben's grimy hands and opened the door for him to pass out.

Left alone once more, the lawyer seated himself at his desk and began nervously sorting his papers, when the door swung in and the custodian of the ink-wells entered.

"Back already!" exclaimed Forbes. "Marvelous! How did you do it?"

Then, observing for the first time that the boy carried nothing in his hands, "Well, where's the ink?"

"I haven't had time to fill them," answered Ben with a voice which betokened no fear of the result of his announcement. "Miss Richmond is here. She told me to let you know at once, so I thought the ink could wait. I'm off with the note now."

"Miss Richmond!" exclaimed Forbes, in surprise, his features softening into a pleased expression. "You did right. Show Miss Richmond in immediately. And remember I am not in if any one else calls—that is, not in to anybody but Mr. James MacGowan. I am expecting him."

"All right, sir," answered Ben, whose face lighted up with the thought that he could loaf a while with "Nick, the Boy Detective."

"I can take my time about delivering this note," he decided. "He'll forget he ever handed it to me now that she is here."

The next moment he stood before Forbes's visitor.

"Mr. Forbes says walk right in, miss," he said, as he ushered her to the door where Forbes stood waiting.

The lawyer was a bit nervous, as he always was in her presence, but she pretended not to notice this fact.

As Ben closed the door and left them alone, Forbes looked at her as one would gaze at a picture. What a wonderful difference she made in the office, with its somber furnishings! He forgot all about his new scheme for making money, forgot about the ink-wells, and everything else in the world but her.

There she stood in her long mink fur coat, with hat to match. A bunch of orchids was fastened on her breast. Her cheeks glowed with a rosy hue, and her blue eyes sparkled with the enjoyment of life. Forbes thought she had never looked so beautiful.

"Miss Richmond!" he exclaimed. "This is a delightful surprise. Won't you be seated?"

"Thank you," she answered.

As he watched her he fell to wondering what his chances might be. If only he had the courage to ask—but that was useless. He a poor lawyer, and she one of the richest young women in the country! The combination was not to be considered for a moment.

However, the next few days might bring about a change. If the cream-separator proved all he believed it to be, ah! then—

"It's good to get inside where it's nice and warm," she said with a gracious smile. "I have been out for an airing for the past two hours; and, to tell the truth, I've had just a little more air than I needed."

"Won't you remove your furs?"

"No, thank you, not yet. We had a narrow escape from arrest on our way down. My chauffeur, as you know, will never recover from a spirit of speeding."

She laughed merrily at the recollection.

"Of course you are wondering what has brought me here this afternoon. It seems that I am always in some legal quandary. One is dreadfully handicapped when there are no lawyers in the family."

She looked archly at him, but if he caught the delicate inference he gave no sign.

"So many of my friends are fortunate to have a brother, or a father, or some one who is a lawyer," she went on. "But mother and I are so utterly helpless. That's the reason we are compelled to consult you on the slightest provocation."

"I am very happy to be consulted," said Forbes. "A lawyer is a necessary evil in such instances as yours, where large estates are to be handled. What is the difficulty?"

"It's about that property on Central Park West. I had decided not to sell after the purchaser declared the price too much; then he changed his mind, and concluded that he would come to my terms. Here is the deed which I am to sign. Our agent left it this afternoon.

"You know I am dreadfully afraid of all such official-looking documents. I know no more than a child on such subjects. Everything seems to be all right, and I was on the verge of affixing my name without bothering you; but at the last moment I decided it was better to have you look it over. You always do the right thing, and nothing escapes your keen eye."

Forbes looked up at her, pleased beyond expression by her confidence. Was there another woman in the whole world who trusted him as did Miss Richmond? But, of course, that was merely a matter of business. He had saved her from blunders which would have cost her thousands, and she appreciated it—that was all.

He glanced over the document she handed him.

"It's a lucky thing you came to me," he said. "Here's that matter of taxes and improvements. The way it is worded in this deed makes the entire amount fall on you at the present time, when, as a matter of fact, it is not due for three years, and should then be paid by the purchaser. I will draw up a new deed and set these details right. This will never do."

He turned around in his chair toward his desk and selected a paper from one of the pigeon-holes, then picked up his pen to fill out the necessary spaces. Absent-mindedly he held it over in the direction of the missing ink-well, then remembered that Ben had not returned with the ink.

"That stupid boy!" he exclaimed. "I sent him on an errand. He should have been back long ago. But you know what the average office-boy is when it comes to time. This one is no exception to the rule."

He wondered if there could be any hitch about Miller sending the desired two hundred. He looked at his fair visitor and thought of the promised millions. He couldn't give her more than she had; but, at least, her friends should not say that she had married a penniless lawyer.

"If you will excuse me just a moment," he went on, "I will get some ink with which to draw up this deed. Then you can sign it and dismiss the matter from your mind."

She nodded permission, and he left the room.

During his absence she glanced about and noted the severe plainness of the atmosphere in which he spent the greater part of his life. She knew his trials and his pride, and she had done everything in her power to let him understand that she appreciated his position; that she was willing to meet him half-way.

To tell the truth, she had stepped just a little over in the direction of three-quarters of the journey which separated them, but if he noticed the fact he gave no indication of it.

The room was warm, and she was beginning to feel the heat of her fur automobile coat; so she stood up and removed it, disclosing to view a beautiful white broadcloth afternoon costume. It was an Empire effect and showed her lithe figure to perfection.

She took the orchids from her coat and pinned them to her dress, then tossed the wrap on a chair.

At this moment the door opened, swung violently toward her, and struck her arm. She moved to one side. As she did so she stepped directly in the way of Forbes, who, an ink-well in each hand, had pushed the door open with his foot.

Simultaneously two splattering streams of red-and-black ink poured themselves in overgenerous profusion on the handsome white gown, which was a Paquin creation, and had arrived only the day before from Paris. Miss Richmond had determined that Forbes should be the first to see it, and with feminine wiliness had chosen the dramatic moment to display it.

Now, covered with red-and-black ink, the climax had lost its effectiveness. She could have cried with mortification.

Forbes stood speechless for a moment. His hands were covered with the two shades of ink, but he didn't care about that. They were too funny for words, but he never saw them. He looked only at the damage he had caused.

"Oh, Miss Richmond, what can I say? What can I do? I am wretched over my clumsiness. What a beautiful gown! I believe it's the most becoming one I have ever seen you wear, and I have ruined it. Ink will never come out. What a shame — what a shame! What can I do? Is there anything I can get to remove it?"

Miss Richmond looked ruefully down at the bespattered dress.

"Don't worry about it, please. It was only an accident."

"A very costly one," added Forbes, thinking that now he had queered himself forever; for if there is one unpardonable thing, in the average woman's opinion, it is masculine clumsiness.

"Your hands are covered with ink," remarked Miss Richmond.

"So they are," said Forbes, noticing them for the first time.

"Wash them," she directed; "then we may be able to think of something to do for the dress."

"This will help some," said Forbes, picking up some clean sheets of blotting-paper which had been placed on his desk that morning.

He wiped his hands on some newspapers; then with the blotters endeavored to mop up the trickling fluid, which was carelessly wending its way down the length of her skirt.

It was the first time he had ever approached so close to her, and he actually blushed. He hesitated to become so familiar; but she paid no attention to his diffidence, and held out the folds of her skirt, so that he could more easily reach the ink.

"I know you think me unpardonably awkward," he ventured, as he selected a fresh blotter and resumed his efforts.

He saw with dismay that, whereas the paper absorbed the ink, ugly stains remained.

"Oh, Miss Richmond!" he now exclaimed in despair, "I fear it is utterly ruined. Your beautiful gown! I suppose you wore it for some special occasion."

"Yes," answered the young lady, "I did. I wore it for you to see. No one else has been favored with an inspection as yet."

"It is beautiful, and you—you are always so," said Forbes with unexpected boldness.

"Am I?" she asked, waiting for further developments.

"Always."

"Perhaps my clothes have a great deal to do with your thinking such extravagant things of my appearance," she remarked.

"That's it!" he exclaimed bitterly. "Clothes have a great deal to do with it. I don't mean in regard to how you look, for you couldn't help being lovely, no matter what you wear; but you are the type of woman who must have fine things. You've had them all your life, and you must continue to have them. They are a necessity."

"Not so much as you may think," she answered, looking at him audaciously. "There's one thing I would rather have than all else in the world, but somehow I don't seem to be able to get it."

"And what is that?" asked the lawyer, who was still busy with the blotting-paper. By this time the dress was a sight to behold.

"The unselfish love of one man," she replied without hesitation.

"You've had that for ten years," he answered on the impulse of the moment,

hardly realizing that the long-delayed words had slipped out. "I've loved you ever since the day you made your début. Do you remember?"

"Yes, I remember," she said, with a beautiful blush.

"Great Heaven, Margaret, you don't know how I have loved you!"

"Well, you have taken a long time to make me realize it," she replied in a low voice.

He studied her face for a moment, and read her thoughts in her eyes.

"Margaret, you can't mean that you really—"

"Yes, I do—really," she answered. "It's been ten years for me, too."

He put his arms about her, and she laid her head on his shoulder. He forgot everything except that he loved her, and that he had at last bridged the chasm that had separated them for so long.

"When shall it be?" he asked, carried away by his happiness.

He forgot the family obligations which weighed him down; forgot his small income; forgot everything in the world, except that he stood face to face with the great moment in his life.

"Whenever you say," she answered shyly, putting her head once more on his shoulder. "It's a delightful feeling to be engaged."

"Wonderful!" he responded, taking her hand and pressing it to his lips in adoration. "You have no rings on," he commented.

"No, I'm tired of them."

"There's one you mustn't tire of," he went on. "The one I shall put on your finger. Let's go get it now."

He was all enthusiasm and impulsiveness, and she was enjoying these new-found traits in him.

"I sha'n't be able to convince myself that you are really promised to me until I see my ring on your hand. Shall we get it now? What do you say?"

"I think it would be just the thing to do," she answered encouragingly. "After waiting ten years for an engagement-ring, one can't afford to lose much more time."

"But your dress?" he inquired, looking down at the red-and-black spots.

"Oh, don't bother about it. My coat will cover it."

The combination of imported gown and mink fur once more brought to his mind the luxuries to which she was accustomed. Was he doing the right thing?

Unconsciously he placed his hand in his pocket, and its emptiness brought to his mind the real state of affairs. He recollected that he had exactly five dollars to his name.

How could he buy an engagement-ring with such a ridiculous sum? He fell into an embarrassed silence.

At this juncture a knock came at the door, which was opened immediately by Ben, the office-boy, who handed Forbes an envelope. It was a bulky package, and by its exterior the lawyer knew that his request for two hundred had been granted.

His spirits rose. Everything was forgotten, except the joyous fact that he was engaged, although he couldn't for the life of him understand how he had summoned up courage to bring it about.

"Come, let us go," he said, holding up her coat and helping her into it with a delicious sense of proprietorship. "I shall never forgive myself for my clumsiness, and yet if it hadn't been for the ink I mightn't have asked you."

"I'm glad it happened," she answered happily. "But isn't it all so sudden and so romantic? Just fancy calling on a dignified bachelor of a lawyer to consult him on a business matter, and then to have it end like this!"

She fastened her coat so that the dress was once more completely concealed from view.

"There, you see, it's all right. My car is waiting."

"I'll leave my desk as it is," he said, "and won't bother about finishing this brief until my return."

"Don't ever let me cause you to forget your business," she protested, with a smile.

"You have already made me forget everything," he said, and he spoke the truth, for in his new-found joy MacGowan and his get-rich-quick scheme had completely escaped his mind.

The two entered the huge automobile, the footman slammed the door, and away they sped on their interesting errand. Their destination was only a

few blocks off, and it was not long before they were absorbed in the contemplation of circlets, clusters, and solitaires.

II.

In the meantime, the hour of appointment between Forbes and MacGowan had arrived. The latter sat in the outer room, waiting, when Forbes entered. He walked in with a debonair manner, quite different from his usual one.

Something seemed to have lifted him up and out of himself. He was actually humming a bit of a love-song. The moment he caught sight of MacGowan, however, a complete transformation occurred. His face fell, and he greeted him in a depressed sort of fashion.

"Oh, you've come back, have you?" he asked, in a strained voice.

"Yes, here I am. Well, did you get the two hundred?" asked MacGowan anxiously.

"Yes, I got it."

"You did!" exclaimed MacGowan exultantly. "That's fine. For a moment I feared you hadn't been successful. You won't regret going in on this scheme. It's great! Can't fail to make a fortune for both of us, and on so little capital, too. We can get it going right away, and then the money will pour in."

Forbes didn't answer. His face assumed a still more worried expression.

"Anything the matter with you?" asked MacGowan, in a sympathetic tone.

"Matter!" groaned Forbes, who had just begun to understand what he had lost by his impulsiveness. "I'm engaged."

"What—engaged? Then I must congratulate you."

Forbes said nothing, but absent-mindedly fingered some papers lying on his desk.

"You're in luck, old fellow," continued MacGowan. "Of course, she is the 'one woman in the world,' and, with the money you will receive by making this investment, why, there's nothing more to be desired. You chose a fortunate time for putting out the two hundred. A married man always needs more money than he ever did before. I expect to get married soon myself. The girl and the money—these are the necessaries of life."

"That's just it!" exclaimed Forbes. "That's what is worrying me. I have the girl, but no money."

"Of course you haven't it yet, but it's a sure thing," answered MacGowan consolingly. "That two hundred is all that is necessary."

"But I haven't the two hundred," said Forbes.

"What!" exclaimed MacGowan in consternation. "You said just a minute ago that you got it."

"So I did get it, but I haven't it now."

"I don't understand," rejoined MacGowan, whose voice displayed the annoyance he could not conceal. "You had it and you haven't it. What do you mean?"

"I've spent it," confessed Forbes, in a bashful way. "My intentions were certainly of the best. I sent for the money, and had it right here in the office."

"Well?" inquired MacGowan in a cold, incredulous tone.

"Then—I, er—that is, I became engaged," stammered the lawyer. "It happened in the most unexpected fashion; and, of course, when a fellow becomes engaged, the first thing he thinks of, very naturally, is an engagement-ring. He feels surer when he sees her wearing it. I forgot everything, except the fact that I had what I have been waiting ten years for; so, you see, instead of putting the two hundred in the cream-separating project, I invested it in a diamond ring for Miss Richmond."

"Miss Richmond! You don't mean Margaret Richmond?"

MacGowan's face was a study. He sat speechless.

"What's the matter?" asked Forbes, noticing his silence. "I'm sorry I had to disappoint you in the matter. I know how you feel. It's a blow to me, too, for the money would have meant a great deal. But you yourself would have done the same had you been in my place."

"So you are engaged to Margaret Richmond!" repeated MacGowan, as if he couldn't believe the news. "And you will get her immense fortune."

"Nothing of the sort," indignantly exclaimed Forbes. "I wouldn't touch a penny of it. I shall make my own money. What's hers now will always be hers. Now, you understand how it occurred, don't you, MacGowan?" he concluded, "and please believe that my failure to give you the two hundred is as great a disappointment to me as it is to you."

"Disappointment isn't the word," said MacGowan. "You've ruined all my plans. Good afternoon."

As he walked out of the room, the door slammed behind him, and seemed to emphasize the moods of both Forbes and himself.

III.

LEFT alone, the lawyer thought over all the extraordinary happenings of the day. Well, there was nothing to be done then. The money was gone, and he couldn't raise another amount of like proportions.

After all, it was only to place himself in a position where he might ask her to marry him that he had wanted the money. The deed had been done unpremeditatedly, so it remained for the future to bring him another chance of investment.

At this juncture Mr. Brown, the senior partner, entered the room.

"I looked in your office about a half-hour ago, but you were out," he said. "What about that brief?"

"I will finish it in a little while now," answered Forbes. "I was obliged to go out on unexpected business."

"What's the matter, my boy? You look unhappy about something."

"I've just made a fool of myself," said Forbes. "I had a splendid chance to make an investment of two hundred dollars, and I let it slip by because"—he hesitated in a confused manner—"because I couldn't wait to buy something I wanted."

"What was the investment? Perhaps I can tell you whether you did wisely in not making it."

"It was a new way to separate cream from milk at a wonderful saving—no waste at all. There was a fortune in it."

"Oh, that was it! And who was the promoter in this instance?"

"James MacGowan, the real-estate man."

"MacGowan! You had a narrow escape, my boy. There's nothing in his scheme. It's been tried before. MacGowan is an unscrupulous fellow, whose one idea in life is to marry a wealthy woman and live off her fortune for the rest of his days.

"Lately he has been paying attentions to Margaret Richmond, and only yesterday made a boast that he would propose and be accepted before the day was over. Hurlbut told me about it. He says MacGowan tried to borrow two hundred from him. Evidently he was hard-pressed for money with which to make a splurge before Miss Richmond. He seized upon you as the most promising victim."

"So that was his game," said Forbes bitterly. "He wanted to marry Margaret Richmond?"

"Yes. Every one knows that. He has stated his ambition openly. But she is not interested in him."

"How do you know?" asked Forbes, with inward satisfaction.

"Because you are the man!"

"Am I?" inquired the young lawyer with a twinkle in his eye.

"There's no doubt in my mind as to that," said Mr. Brown. "Now, instead of worrying your head with these wild-cat schemes which promise to make you rich quick, if you had turned your attention to something more worth while, you would long ago have arrived at the success for which you have been aiming all these years. The trouble with you has been, you have had no anchor."

"Anchor?" inquired Forbes, puzzled.

"Yes—in other words, a wife. She would hold you down to common sense and realities. You would not be drifting here and there with every idle wind that blows. In short, my boy, it is my belief that every man who expects to amount to anything in this world should be married."

"But how can I marry when my salary is insufficient to support a wife? It is barely enough for my mother and sisters."

"You have always wanted to become a senior partner in the firm, haven't you?" asked Mr. Brown.

"Yes, but for some reason I haven't achieved my ambition."

"For the simple reason that you have stubbornly remained a bachelor. Had you agreed to marry—"

"But I was waiting for promotion first."

"There's where you have been wrong. Now, instead of filling your brain and emptying your pocket of two hundred dollars in the MacGowan scheme, had you invested that amount in an engagement-ring, you would this day have been made a senior partner."

Forbes's face shone with the extremest pleasure.

"That's exactly what I did, Mr. Brown," he said.

"What?"

"I took the two hundred I meant for MacGowan and purchased an engagement-ring for Miss Margaret Richmond. We're engaged."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Mr. Brown, hardly believing what he heard. "You don't really mean that you and Margaret—"

"Yes, sir. Won't you congratulate me?"

"Most heartily," responded Mr. Brown, with a vigorous hand-shake. "I've been waiting for this moment for several years. I now give my consent to your becoming a senior partner at once. You have chosen well. Your salary is increased. Your position in the world assumes a more solid foundation. I need not ask if you love her. I can see it in your face."

Forbes actually blushed under the joy which overwhelmed him upon receiving so much encouragement from his superior.

"As to that two hundred, my boy," continued Brown, with a rousing slap on Forbes's shoulder, "it seems to me that you couldn't have made a better investment."

# TROUBLE IN BUNCHES.

By SEWARD W. HOPKINS.

Author of "By Bullet Persuasion," "Taking Big Chances," "The Hoodoo Ranch," etc.

**A matter of one American obliging another starts with a mistake, opening the way to crimes, casualties, and catastrophes galore.**

## CHAPTER I.

### "HELP A FELLOW OUT."

THE wildest flight of fancy would not see in the inn of Henrique Garcia anything resembling a palatial hotel. It was not even clean. The furnishings were old, and had been meager enough when they were new.

But it was the only inn at Santa Rosa, and so, perforce, having important business in and around that town for some time to come, I was a guest at Señor Garcia's hotel.

I was sitting, one afternoon, in one of the three rooms I occupied in this primitive hostelry, making a study of some bark that two of the men I employed had brought me, when I became aware of a shadow falling inside from the door, which I had not closed.

"Dr. Fraser?" came my name in a questioning way.

I looked up and found my visitor to be an American, if ever there was one. He was young, tall, stoutly built, and had—not a fascinating smile, nor even a fetching manner—but a self-confident air that marks our countrymen everywhere, no matter what may be their business.

"That's my name," I answered. "Come in."

He entered. I fancied his countenance, as he looked at me, expressed a little something like surprise.

"I expected to see an older man," he said.

"I am sorry," I replied, "that I have not reached an age sufficiently advanced to please you. However, each minute adds some; and if you will sit down here

for a few years, possibly I may come up to your expectations."

He laughed.

"Probably. But I would not require your services in a few years," he said. "I am intruding upon your valuable time, I know, and yet, as you and I are the only Americans in Santa Rosa, I made bold to come to you, as I need the immediate assistance of a man I can trust; and whom could I trust so well as one of my own countrymen? Certainly not a person born in this forsaken hole."

I saw that the fellow actually had something to say, for with all his laughter there was a vein of seriousness about him that arrested my attention at once.

I shoved my work aside, lit a cigar, handed him one, and leaned back in my chair.

"I am always ready to help a fellow American out of a scrape," I said. "Fire away. First, though, since you know my name so well, it would be wise, and at least polite, to introduce yourself."

"I am coming to that. I was so pleased at finding you here that I forgot my manners. My name is Jim Balover. Of course, that doesn't mean as much to you as your name does to me. I can read the measly little sheet they call a newspaper here, and I have read how Dr. Fraser, of the New York Society of Botanical and Medical Research, was sent to Santa Rosa to investigate the properties of certain new barks and shrubs, specimens of which were carried to New York by travelers. But I expected to see a bald, spectacled old fellow."

"And now," I answered, "since you see a man almost as young as yourself, without spectacles, you are disappointed."

"No. Quite the contrary. I am distinctly pleased, for a young man like yourself will be more likely to sympathize with me, and give me the assistance I need."

"Suppose you get at it, and let me know in what way you require my assistance. Then we can talk more understandingly. Is it a matter of money?"

"N-no, I didn't come to ask you for a loan. It is something much more important than mere money. The fact is that I want you to steal a girl for me."

The hand that was conveying my cigar to my mouth halted in mid air and I gazed at my visitor, seeking to determine whether I was entertaining a lunatic or a joker. There was nothing to indicate either.

"You seem surprised," he went on. "Of course, I don't quite mean *that*. But I thought I'd spring the worst shape first, so that I could by degrees work back to what will interest you. Now—if you are ready to listen."

"I am listening," I said.

"Of course," he continued, "you know, or at least know *of*, old Don Manuel Fernandez."

"The banker?"

"Yes."

"I know Don Manuel in a business way. My letters of credit are in his bank."

"Have you ever met his daughter, Isobel?"

"No. I have not met the family of the don at all. I have been too busy with my work to bother about social affairs. I am not anxious to remain in Santa Rosa any longer than may be really necessary."

"Well, the fact is that Isobel Fernandez and I are in love with each other. No mere flirtation, but the honest and lasting love a true man and true woman feel for each other."

"You are fortunate," I said. "In that case, I can scarcely see in what manner you need my help."

"I am not fortunate. I am, of course, lucky to have won the love of such a girl as Señorita Fernandez. But I haven't won the girl, by any means."

"Parental objections?" I asked.

"Decidedly and determinedly so. I have not only been forbidden to make love to Isobel, but I have been denied admittance to the house. I might overcome this in time if I had the time, but old Fernandez is too sharp and cute for that. Whatever is done must be done to-night."

"Why? Why is to-night so crucial?"

"Because this evening Isobel sails on a ship now in the bay for Spain, where she is to enter a convent, and will be forever lost to me."

"That is enough to rend the soul of an American lover," I grinned.

I had never been in love, and did not know its pangs.

"You see how urgent the case is," he went on, not noticing my flippant observation.

"I see. Why can't you and the fair Isobel fix up the job yourselves and elope?"

"I am to be shot if I am seen within a short distance of the house, and—read this."

He handed me a folded paper. It was an order from the Alcalde of Santa Rosa for Señor James Balover to leave Santa Rosa before sunset on pain of being shot if discovered in the street after that hour.

"'M," I said. "They *are* taking the matter seriously. Can't you disguise yourself and remain?"

"Where will I get a disguise in this hole? There are no costumers here. And I am followed about by an officer of the army. One of his spies is outside now. I don't feel like getting my skin full of lead. I want to get Isobel and reach God's country and make her my wife."

"And you want me to manage the elopement for you. Is that what you propose?"

"Yes. You will, won't you, doctor? Don't forsake a fellow when he's in such trouble. If once they get her on the ship, it's all up with me. I'll shoot myself. I will, so help me."

"No, I won't help you do that. And I am not sure that I will help you in the other matter. I should know more about the case, it seems to me, before I take any risks. I have no greater predilection for having my skin shot full of lead than you have."

"But, you see, they won't suspect you. I can't make a move but what it is reported to the old don. You are a scientific man, and can go and come without any trouble."

"That is, so long as I stick to my science. How long my immunity would last if I was caught running away with the daughter of Don Manuel, you can easily guess."

"But you are shrewd. I've read something of you. I know you've had plenty of adventures, even if they haven't been love affairs. Help a fellow out, won't you? Do, like a good American—as one American would do to another."

I sat and mused.

## CHAPTER II.

### PLANNING THE TRICK.

I ROUSED up from a dreamy contemplation of myself backed up against the wall of the prison at Santa Rosa, with a file of soldiers about to fire into me.

"What is it you wish me to do—just?" I asked. "Be explicit. Do you want me to go to Don Manuel and intercede for you?"

"Lord, no!" exclaimed the young fellow. "You couldn't budge old Fernandez with anything less than dynamite. And if you used that, we'd both be shot to pieces."

"Well," I said, "as I remarked before, running away with young women has never been a pastime nor a matter of business with me. Tell me fully and in detail just how things stand. And hurry. You've only about an hour in which to get out of Santa Rosa and save your skin."

"I know it," he replied with a shudder. "How well I know it! Well, listen: If you know Don Manuel at all, you know he is a miserly old curmudgeon, and mean to the last degree. He keeps one carriage and only one coachman. That fellow is drunk. I got him drunk with the beastly stuff they tipple down here, and he won't find his wits for a couple of days.

"The Cristobel is anchored off the quay, and her launch is at the end of the long pier. Don Manuel's plans, so far as I know them, is to have his evening dinner as usual, and then, about nine o'clock, take Isobel to the pier in the carriage. She will be accompanied by an old duenna, as ugly as sin in looks and as sharp as a steel trap.

"Of course, his own coachman being drunk, he will either hire some one else to drive, or he may hire a complete outfit. In either case, the driver will be an outsider, and, like all such in Santa Rosa, will be open to a bribe."

"Well, then what? We will consider the new driver bribed—to do what?"

"Why—to get down and let you take his place."

"That is certainly a most delectable scheme. You are so careful of your own skin that I marvel you find time to think so much of mine. How far do you think I would get with the fair Isobel?"

"Why—why, don't you see? Nobody will know the difference. They haven't followed you around till they know every hair in your head as they have me. A little change to the common costume here, and nobody will question you at all."

"I see," I said dryly. "Now we will continue our imaginings. The driver is bribed. He sneaks away, and I am in his place, with a greasy sombrero on my head. Proceed."

"Well, you see the program will be that about nine o'clock old Don Manuel will appear with Isobel and the duenna, and order you to drive to the quay. He will assist Isobel into the carriage, and the duenna will follow. *His* idea will be to get in with them. But *your* plan will be to whip up the horses and leave him behind."

"Better and better," I said. "Shall I wear a frying-pan over the region of my heart and lungs? The don probably carries a pistol, since he has threatened to shoot you; or, if not, there will be a soldier near by to fire at me."

"These fellows can't shoot straight."

"Then why are you afraid of them?"

"Well, you'll have a swift team of horses. If I could get on the driver's seat, I wouldn't be afraid."

"Let us proceed. We will now imagine Don Manuel left behind, and I am driving like mad—where?"

"I've thought that all out. You ride a good deal, don't you?"

"Yes; considerable."

"I thought so. Then you know the old *hacienda* on the Santa di Lucia road? The one where the *casa,* or house, was burned and the owner killed in a fight with some bandits?"

"I know the place. The most lonesome, God-forsaken, and inaccessible spot to be found within a hundred miles."

"Just so, and that makes it suit our purpose. When you leave Don Manuel behind, drive as rapidly as you can to the old *casa.* I'll meet you there."

"There seems still a difficulty," I replied. "What are we to do with Isobel? The old ruin is no place for a delicately nurtured girl; and, anyway, we can't keep a young lady all night in any such place. We would deserve to be shot."

"Of course," he admitted, reddening. "I know that. But don't you remember the little country church a few miles beyond the old *casa?* There is the good Padre Miguel. He'll marry us—if we pay him well—and then Isobel and I can go to some other town. I wouldn't be afraid to return here if she was once my wife. Or we could get on board a ship bound for the States."

"And you are perfectly sincere in your intention to marry the girl?"

"Oh, my Heaven! Can you doubt it? Do you think—do I look like a fellow who would try to drag you into a mere escapade?"

To tell the truth, he didn't. His frank blue eyes looked straight into mine, and I could see the love-light dancing in them.

"Of course," I remarked, "you are aware that this is a most dangerous undertaking. If we are caught at it, or either one of us, it means shooting, death, and an unknown grave. They don't mince matters here. We might appeal to our own government till we were black in the face. I don't know what your business in Santa Rosa may be, but I know I wasn't sent down here to run away with a banker's daughter."

"I know—I know. I came down for my uncle to do some prospecting. He's in the fancy lumber business. But we won't get caught. I'll be out of the way, and you are too shrewd to be caught by a lot of half dopy mugs like the soldiers of Santa Rosa."

Now, the study of botany and its applied relation to *materia medica* does not, as a rule, develop a romantic turn of mind, although, in its own way, my work was romantic enough of itself.

I make no excuses for my weakness even in listening to this boyish, blue-eyed lover. I am merely setting down the facts as they occurred, and anybody who wishes to declare me a fool is perfectly welcome to do so.

But before making the declaration positive, I ask merely that you go on a little further and see how big a fool I really was.

Then, again, I really liked the fellow. He was so evidently sincere in his love for Isobel Fernandez, and so earnest in his eager request for my help in getting her to elope with him, or in carrying her off to enable her to marry him, that my inclinations ran away perhaps with my judgment.

Furthermore, I had little liking for the swaggering citizens of Santa Rosa. I had found them all more or less treacherous. And I knew it was just as Balover had said—that whoever the strange driver of the banker's carriage might be, he would be amenable to the influence of a little American gold.

"Well," I said, after I had ruminated a little on the peculiar leap I was about to take from the staid profession of botanical student to that of intermediary in an elopement, "I'll help you out, Balover, if I can. Mind you, I promise nothing. I say I will simply try. I can see innumerable difficulties that may crop up. Fernandez may at any moment change his mind and plans.

"One thing is certain enough," I added. "The only way you can help me is by making yourself as scarce as possible. Get out of Santa Rosa as if you were going to stay. Don't loiter. Don't act as if there was any plot afoot. Just go. I'll do the rest—if I can."

"Oh, thank you, Dr. Fraser," he cried, leaping up and grasping my hand. "I knew you wouldn't go back on a fellow. And I know you'll succeed. It is time I was going. I've got a good horse, and I'll be at the burned old *casa* before you are. I'll meet you and Isobel. Then—for Padre Miguel's—and happiness."

The boy's enthusiasm and joy were so great that even when he had gone I sat with a grin on my face. Surely, I was falling into queer ways in Santa Rosa.

## CHAPTER III.

### WITH REINS IN HAND.

Now, although I had, under the spell of the pleading blue eyes of the lovesick Balover, yielded to his importunate request, I was by no means so sure of my success as he had seemed to be.

To get into the place of the driver of a banker's carriage and run away with his only daughter is no simple matter. I knew I had undertaken to put through what, in the minds of the people of Santa Rosa, would be a greater crime than mere murder, which they were willing to commit almost any time and for almost any cause.

Without Balover there to deaden my conscience or sense of personal danger, I felt cold chills stealing over me as I thought of facing the rifles of a vengeful soldiery.

And the dark, dank cell of the Santa Rosa prison kept constantly cropping up before my mental vision.

But I had promised the boy to help him, and help him I would now, even though it cost me my life.

I had, however, no notion of taking any unnecessary risk. I did not choose to put my own life in danger, and I was so constituted that once having entered into a plot, no matter how dangerous it might be, I proposed to go through with it.

I went to my dinner in the *patio* of the little inn. The cuisine was as good as could be expected, and the fountain in the *patio,* supplied with water from a tank on a high tower, made the atmosphere cool and comfortable. I chatted with Señor Henrique, and spoke of the arduous duties I was called upon to perform, and my weariness when evening came.

"*Si, señor,*" he said. "It must indeed be dull and tiresome work. Peek, peek, through the glasses in the little pipes; boil, boil, in the little copper kettle; taste, taste, till your tongue must smart. And for what do you do all this?"

By the glasses in the little pipes he meant my microscope.

"I do it in the interest of science, Henrique," I answered. "The physicians in my country are looking, looking all the time for new remedies to make people well, or keep them well when there is an epidemic. I am sent here for that purpose. Yet, it is true, it is dull and tiresome work, and I am utterly worn out. I shall smoke my pipe and then go to bed. I have much to do to-morrow."

"Indeed yes, a good night's sleep will be of benefit to the *señor* doctor."

Of course, going to bed was about the farthest thing from my intention. But I wanted to prove an alibi if I could.

I had an idea that if Don Manuel was prompt to carry out the program that Balover had set down, I could reach the old ruin, deliver the girl into his hands, or even drive them to the chapel of Padre Miguel, and return to Santa Rosa in time to get to bed and show a straight face and a clean record in the morning.

But, in order to carry out my purpose successfully, I needed some kind of a disguise with which to make myself look as much like a native of Santa Rosa as possible. Fortunately, it was the time of a new moon, or almost no moon at all, and the streets of Santa Rosa were not lighted at night.

I have already casually mentioned having employed men to search the forests surrounding Santa Rosa for certain roots and barks I needed, and one of these, a worthless, lazy fellow, lived in a hut not far from the inn of Señor Henrique.

I sauntered along the road to his hut. I had paid him that very day, and had no doubt that I should find him, if I found him at all, in an advanced state of intoxication.

If he wasn't, a small amount of money would soon see him on the road back to Henrique's to finish the job.

This man lived with an old woman he said was his mother, and I suppose she was. She was hideous enough to be almost anybody's mother who was willing to acknowledge her, and, in addition to her horrible old face and bent form, she was stone deaf and about half blind. She was almost totally black.

I found my man, as I expected, sitting in a state of semistupidity on his doorstep, and I spoke to him. He answered, trying to straighten up, as though he feared I would censure him.

Ordinarily, I would. But just now it suited me to find him thus—so low does a man sink when once he enters into a nefarious plot to run away with a banker's daughter.

"I am going for a walk," I said in his own tongue. "I have forgotten something. I told Henrique to do something for me which requires money, and I forgot to leave any with him. I wish you would take it to him."

"With pleasure, *señor*," he answered, getting to his feet.

"Here it is, and here is something for yourself. Don't drink too much, however, as I may need you to-morrow."

"*Señor* need never fear," he answered.

And I was really surprised to see how straight he did walk as, with the money clutched in his hand, he started for Henrique's inn.

The old woman knew nothing about all this, and I heard her shuffling about inside. I waited till she had gone to the rear of the hut with a broom and pail, after swabbing the floor, and then stole inside to find some of the clothing worn by my man.

It was not a difficult matter. I picked out the best jacket I could find, a little shoulder shawl that some of the men affected, and a few insignificant articles that, taken together, made up a complete disguise.

With these I hurried in a roundabout way to the inn, and succeeded in reaching my room without meeting either Henrique or my man, although I heard their voices.

I had plenty of time, and leisurely arrayed myself in my stolen raiment.

I did not regard them as stolen, for the man was in my employ, I had paid him much more than he ever earned, and I could easily return the garments, with a payment for their use, on the following day.

Giving myself ample time, and taking a pocketful of gold and silver pieces, I sauntered out of the inn, passing Henrique, who glanced at me, but who did not seem to recognize me in my strange garb. This was cause for congratulation; for if the innkeeper, who saw me almost every day, did not know me, there was almost a certainty that Fernandez would not.

The banker lived on the outskirts of Santa Rosa, in a rather pretentious house, quite the most pretentious in the town with the exception of the alcalde's; and as I reached it, I found that the plans as laid down by Balover had been wonderfully accurate.

Before the house stood the banker's own fine carriage, with his span of horses brought from Argentina, and on the

driver's seat was an individual who was dressed sufficiently like me to make my own get-up perfectly plausible.

He was evidently sleepy. He nodded, and bobbed from one side to another. Sleepiness was characteristic of most of the inhabitants of Santa Rosa, unless there was a cock-fight on, or some kindred amusement.

"Good night, *amigo,*" I said as I stopped alongside the carriage. "Since when did you enter the employ of Don Manuel?"

The fellow opened his eyes and turned to me. To my amazement, I discovered that he was a worthless individual who had at different times driven me around the town and vicinity.

"See here," I said, speaking in a low tone. "Bend over. I wish to perform an act to-night that means much to me. I want to drive this team."

"Ah!" he whispered. "*Señor* is in love with the pretty *señorita.*"

"Yes," I said, for now I was so deep in the mess that even a falsehood could not be allowed to stand between me and safety and success.

"Ah!" he breathed again.

"Twenty pesos for you if you go away and say nothing."

"Twenty pesos! Bless the saints! And Jose Maria with a cock-fight to-night, and me without a peso to back the cock to win. Do as you like, *señor;* my tongue will be torn from me before I breathe a word."

I put the money in his hand. He slipped down from the seat and I climbed into it.

With the reins in my hands, I slouched into a lazy position, and waited for the next act in the drama, comedy, or tragedy, whichever it might prove to be.

## CHAPTER IV.

### SOMETHING OF A MISTAKE.

I DID not have to wait long. I heard the door of Don Manuel's house open, and a stream of light played straight across me. I dared not look. I did want to have a glance at Isobel, to see what kind of girl had so entirely absorbed the love of Balover.

But the light from the entrance was too bright, and I feared the banker might recognize my face, even though Henrique had not. But it had not been light in the part of the inn where I had met Henrique.

I heard the tread of people coming down the stone steps. I gathered up the reins.

"Ho, fellow! Waken," said the voice of Don Manuel. "I have already given you instructions. Obey them."

I had not thought to ask the driver anything about that. I did not need any instructions, anyway. The carriage was supposed to go to the quay, where Isobel would board the launch for the Cristobel.

I felt the sagging of the carriage as some one got in. The plan as laid down between Balover and myself was for me to dash away and leave Don Manuel behind. But, to my surprise, Don Manuel seemed to make no effort to get in.

I heard a gruff adieu, and the carriage-door was slammed.

"Go," said Don Manuel.

There was no need for any wild dash, no danger of any bullets striking me in the back. I laughed softly to myself at the simplicity of it all.

Why, if people did things like this, I could run away with a whole convent full of young women.

I knew the roads well, and was soon bowling along the highway that led to the ruined house spoken of by Balover.

Not a sound come from the carriage. Everything was working smoothly. It would have been to the queen's taste, had there been a queen, but we were in a republic, and this thing surely was not going to be to the taste of the rulers of that republic.

I pondered much over the silence within the carriage, for the distance from Don Manuel's house to the quay was not great, while from Santa Rosa to the old ruin was many miles.

Evidently, there had been some understanding between Balover and Isobel which he had forgotten, in his excitement, to say anything to me about.

Don Manuel's horses, as I have said, were good ones, and the road fair. We were making excellent time.

It was dark — dark is scarcely the

word, for it is called dark when people can even see each other's faces. But this was black.

The horses knew their business, however, and I left it to them to keep on the road.

I had, at the same time, to stare through the darkness and *make* myself see sufficiently to make out the outlines of the old house. This house—or *casa*, as Balover had called it—had been the home of a rich planter, and his *hacienda* extended for a great distance along the road.

I expected Balover would be on the lookout, with a lantern, or with a whoop and yell, when he heard the carriage; but even when I knew we must be getting in the vicinity of the old ruin, I could see no light nor hear a voice.

There was a way, though, by which I knew when we reached it.

Running from the road to the very door almost, there had been an avenue of flowering trees something like magnolias, and their perfume reached for quite a distance. I had admired this avenue when riding through the country; and as soon as I perceived the sweet scent of the flowers, I drove more slowly, to judge the location of the old gateway into the avenue.

Halting the horses, I drew from my pocket a useful little article that I carried with me in my forest travels and which had saved me from many an accident, and, perhaps, had more than once saved my life.

This was a little bull's-eye lantern. Though small, it threw a powerful gleam of light. Lighting this, I threw the ray forward, and by its aid discovered the gateway. Just then the carriage-door opened.

"Why do you stop? Are we there?" asked a sweet voice in Spanish.

"We are here, *señorita*," I answered. "A few more steps and I will assist you."

Still keeping the bull's-eye rays ahead, but somewhat bothering the horses—and a light will, if they are unaccustomed to it—I drove in through the avenue of flowering trees, and pulled up at the ruin.

Now, the old house, having been built of adobe, had not burned to the ground, but the interior had been gutted. There were plenty of walls and partitions left standing.

I got down and went to the carriage-door.

"We are here, *señorita*," I said.

"Oh, how dark it is!" she exclaimed, as she looked out. "I should think they'd have lights."

"I have one, *señorita*," I answered, and I flashed the lantern in her face.

In an instant my blood ran hot through my veins. For here was that most beautiful marvel of all the world, a light-haired Spanish girl. And stunning! To me, in the light of that little lantern, she was the most lovely creature I had ever seen.

I took her hand and helped her out.

"How still it is," she said.

There was a tumbling inside the carriage, and a clumsy body came to the ground.

"Glory be!" said a voice unmistakably Irish. "If iver I get out av this God-forsaken country, niver will I set me foot in it again."

"Why—I do not seem to recognize this place," remarked the *señorita*.

"Hush, *señorita*," I rejoined. "It was all a lucky job put up by Señor Balover. He came to me to help him. I am not what you think me. I am not a native driver of Santa Rosa. I am an American, like Balover. He came to me, as the only other American in Santa Rosa, and told me all about it. He told me how you and he loved each other, and how your father, Don Manuel, refused his consent, and made me promise to bribe the driver and bring you here to meet him.

"He started earlier, having been banished from Santa Rosa at sunset on pain of death, and should have been here first. But undoubtedly he will be here soon.

"He told me about how you were to be sent to Spain to enter a convent, and the poor fellow's heart was almost broken. So, as we of the United States stand together in time of war, so we help each other in love. Confess—I made a neat job of it."

There was silence for a minute. Then a low moan came from the girl's lovely lips, and she sank unconscious to the ground.

"Now, what the divil — what manes

this?" demanded the irate Irishwoman, who was large and unafraid. "You murderin' spalpane, to be makin' off this way wid two dacent women, an' one of thim a lady! I'll have the law on ye if I iver get where there is any law.

"Ye murderin', maraudin' divil, ye! What do ye mane, at all, by this thrick? Answer me, ye poor dirty dago, or I'll smash every bone in your body, even if ye have a butcher-knife up yer sleeve. I'll knock that crooked tongue av yours so it will speak a language Christian people can understand. I don't know the haythen lingo ye've been tellin' my young lady; but I'm spakin' good English, with a touch of better Irish brogue in it, an' that's better than yer dago harangue, even though ye can't understand me."

"But—but I do understand you," I stammered, the cold chills racing like mad up and down my spine. "I spoke Spanish because the Señorita Isobel is Spanish."

"The Sayñoreeta Isobel, is it? An' have yez a telephone connicted between Dam Manuel's house an' this forsaken wilderness that ye do be spakin' Spanish to her, an' her waitin' for the carriage to go to the quay to take the ship fur Spain?"

"Waiting?" I groaned, not knowing whether I was mad or had a madwoman to talk to. "Waiting, did you say? Isobel waiting for the carriage? Who is this young lady, then?"

"Who is this young lady? Who should she be but Miss Kate Arnold, av New York, the niece av Dam Manuel's dead wife, God rest her soul, and Isobel's cousin. An' now, while I try to get my young lady back to life, do you be findin' out when the train starts for Bonus Airs, where we take ship for New York."

Stunned, stupefied, I stood like a thick-headed ass, not knowing what to do, or how stupendous the blunder was that I had made.

## CHAPTER V.

### NEWS OF WILD DOINGS.

GRADUALLY my benumbed senses returned to me. Gradually it dawned upon me that, instead of assisting Balover, I had plunged the entire matter into a boiling mess, the consequences of which could not even be conjectured.

I managed to get enough wit into me to know I ought to try, with the faithful attendant, to resuscitate Miss Arnold.

"What's your name?" I asked the girl.

"Mary O'Donnell. What's yours? Av ye tell the truth, an' are no dago, ye must have a Christianlike name."

"My name is Robert Fraser. I am a physician."

"Physician, is it?" she screamed in a rage. "An' ye stand there like thim Injins in front av cigar-stores, instead av revivin' the girl ye frightened into a fit wid yer outlandish raymint!"

"It isn't a fit," I said. "The young lady has fainted from shock, and fright too, I suppose. I don't wonder at it. Now, this place is safe enough, and you stay with her while I find some water."

Poking around with my bull's-eye lantern, I did discover a well, and fastened to it was a metal cup. I broke the fastening and carried a cup of water to Miss Arnold. Working over her patiently, I soon had the pleasure of seeing her open her eyes.

"Oh!" she gasped.

"You have nothing to fear, Miss Arnold," I said. "Mary O'Donnell has told me your name. I have made a frightful blunder, I know now. But I had no idea that Señorita Fernandez had a visitor from New York, nor any visitor, for that matter. And so, when you entered the carriage, I supposed you were Don Manuel's daughter Isobel, and kept my promise to Balover. But it is a blunder that is easily remedied. I will drive you back to Don Manuel's house."

"Back to Don Manuel's!" she echoed. "Why, I have just been turned out of there. I have been ordered away like a common tramp, and sent home. I took Isobel's part against her father, having that love of liberty and freedom of letting love go where it will, if right, that we have in the States, and Don Manuel, in a frightful rage, ordered me off. I thought I was being driven to the station where I was to take the coast train for Buenos Ayres. I expected to take ship there for New York. Where are we—what is this place?"

"This," I explained, "is a ruined house on a large plantation, several miles from Santa Rosa. It was the place Balover picked out to meet Isobel. I regret my blunder, Miss Arnold, and am sorry that you have missed your train. But that, too, is easily remedied. I will drive you back to Santa Rosa, and Henrique will take care of you at the inn, and to-morrow you can take the train."

"I suppose I've missed the train to-night?"

"Yes; you only had time to catch it when you left Don Manuel's house."

"Oh, if I had only spoken to you! I did speak to Mary about the distance, didn't I, Mary?"

"Indeed ye did, darlin'. An' wasn't it meself told ye it was all right—that the dago knew his business? Well, well, an' this is the night av adventure, to be sure. Here's Miss Kate Arnold, wid a rich father an' a paylaytial home on Fifth Avenue, in the city av New York, an' me, Mary O'Donnell, lady in waitin' to the same, lost in a wilderness in South America, wid an American doctor dressed like a robber av the mountains. Is it me? Is it us, do ye think, or is this a dream comin' from eatin' the dago dishes they have down here? Ow! but will somebody plaze wake me up?"

"You are awake, Mary," said Kate, who could not help laughing. "We are all very much awake to the fact that a simple mistake has made a mess of things. But the suggestion of Mr.—I mean Dr.—Fraser is the only thing. We will go back to Santa Rosa, and to-morrow we can take the train. I suppose our trunks have already gone on to Buenos Ayres."

Just then there was heard the galloping of a horse, and then, when that stopped, the hurried feet of somebody coming toward the light of my lantern.

"Oh, Fraser," burst out the voice of Balover, "you did it well, but you overdid it. Never mind now; where is she—where is my—ah!"

Dimly, because the light of my lantern was not resting on her face, he saw the form and thought he saw the face of Isobel. He sprang forward and attempted to clasp her in his arms.

"I am not Isobel; I am Kate," said Miss Arnold, stepping back a few paces.

"Not Isobel?" he faltered. "Where *is* Isobel?"

"Why, home. Dr. Fraser made a mistake. He didn't know anything about me. So, when I stepped into the carriage with Mary to go to the station—for Don Manuel ordered me off for taking your part—the doctor thought I was Isobel, and brought me here. I fainted. Oh, we've had a delightful time of it!"

"But—but—" stammered poor Balover, "what did you take Don Manuel away for? Where is he?"

"Don Manuel didn't enter the carriage," I answered. "I left him standing on the street in front of his own house."

"But he's *gone!*" bawled Balover. "The whole town is crazy. Old Henrique is stabbed and robbed, and Don Manuel gone, and they are looking for you and me, and there are orders posted to shoot either one of us on sight. I don't know just what stories are believed, there is so much excitement. I couldn't get here any sooner. I was pursued and shot at, and, I guess, hit. But I got out of reach as soon as I dared quit my hiding-place, and was in such a hurry to reach Isobel that I didn't mind a shot or two. And now Isobel isn't here.

"But where is Don Manuel? He isn't home, that's a sure thing. They have sent messengers to every town not connected by telegraph, and there isn't a town as big as a potato barrel where we dare show our heads. They say you stole the horses and stabbed Henrique and robbed him, and that I was an accomplice; and that Miss Arnold ran away with us and stole some money Don Manuel was sending to New York for her father to invest."

"Oh, Heaven!" gasped Kate. "I have it, that is true. What are we going to do! What are we going to do in this case?"

Her voice died away in a perfect wail of distress, and I confess I didn't feel much better.

"The only thing to do," I said, "is to go back and make a clean breast of the whole business. No real harm has been done."

"Make a clean breast of it?" howled

Balover. "To whom will you make a clean breast of it? If Don Manuel was there, *he* might listen to you. But he's missing, I tell you. You wouldn't have time to say boo before the little strut in command at Santa Rosa would have you standing in the middle of the street to be shot, so that all who see might learn. I tell you, we can't go back. We can't go to any town, as matters stand now. We've got to take to the mountains till Don Manuel is found."

"I can't understand what happened to him," I said. "I left him standing there, easily enough. He had accompanied Miss Arnold to the street, and put her in the carriage."

"Well, he disappeared. If Isobel hadn't gone when Miss Arnold got in the carriage, she must be home now. That's the only consoling thing in the whole business."

"I can't see how a man like Don Manuel could disappear so completely," I replied. "He wasn't given to any night rambling. He was essentially a home man."

"I know that," said Balover. "That's what makes everybody say you took him away."

"But," I retorted, getting more and more hopelessly tangled up, "how did they connect me with these grave matters at all?"

"Why," explained Balover, and his voice sounded strange to me all of a sudden, "when Henrique was stabbed, he called for help, and sent for you, of course—you being a doctor. You were not in your room. Then Henrique remembered he saw somebody like you dressed like a native of Santa Rosa pass him in the hall. He described the clothes, and that man of yours went home and discovered that his best suit was missing.

"This man sobered up and told them you had sent him to the inn with money for Henrique, and when he got there Henrique didn't know anything about it. Then they found the fellow that was to have driven the carriage betting pesos at a cock-fight. I lay close to some soldiers who were telling each other about it."

As Balover finished he gave a groan, and then he, like Kate Arnold, toppled over on the floor. I flashed the lantern on him. Blood was coming from his coat-sleeve.

## CHAPTER VI.

### CUT OFF FROM HELP.

We were in a pretty mess, indeed. But, with all the terrors Balover had pictured to us so vividly, my first thought, just then, was for Balover himself.

As the ray of brilliant light from my little lantern showed the fact that he was wounded, and his fainting made it appear really serious, Miss Arnold uttered a cry of sympathy.

Suddenly, between the prostrate form of Balover and my lantern, loomed the shape of Mary O'Donnell.

"Doctor," she said, and she was as calm now as though we had come to the old ruin for a picnic, "I heard what the boy had to say. I know we're in a fine fix, but no shame to you, for ye were tryin' to do for the boy what Miss Kate was tryin' to do for the Sayñoreeta Isobel.

"Do ye see the way it lies now?" she went on. "We've on our hands a frightened girl and a wounded boy. He's only a boy, God bless him, and he's in love. Now, you're a doctor. I'm only the Irish maid to Miss Kate; but I'm strong, an' made of different stuff. We'll pull through, doctor, if you an' I work together."

"Mary," I said, "you certainly are a jewel. While I strip this arm and apply a tourniquet, will you get me some water from the well?"

"Sure I will," replied the girl.

I began to like Mary O'Donnell.

"Take my lantern," I added. "I can manage till you return."

While speaking I had ripped open the sleeve, found the wound, and had about stopped the bleeding. Mary in a few moments had returned with the water.

After all, the hurt was not serious. But Balover had been through so much excitement, and without food, that it took some time to revive him. But he was strong; and as the first glimmering of consciousness appeared, his will power asserted itself, and he sat up.

"Now," I said, "Balover, tell me just how you feel. You have very little fever."

"Oh," he answered, "I feel weak, of course. But I've got my head on my shoulders, and that's something. If I could only think of a way out of this scrape, I'd be all right."

"Well, don't try to think now. It is still far from daylight, and I doubt if any of the searching parties will think of finding us in the burned *casa*. I am going now to find a place for the girls to sleep."

"Sleep, is it?" replied Mary. "I'd not sleep a wink till I knew Miss Kate was safe."

"I admire your spirit, Mary," I said; "but you must sleep. Just now we are all safe. But no one can tell when you will be called upon to use all your strength in the interest of Miss Arnold."

"An' that bein' so, I'll take a wink or two," she replied.

Leaving them, I made an examination of the interior of the various rooms, and by the aid of my lantern I found two places where, if there was but a cushion, the two young women could rest.

I stood a moment, studying. Then a happy thought struck me.

"What are you going to do?" asked Miss Arnold, as I hurried past them toward the carriage.

"I'll show you in a minute," I answered. "You must all rest."

"And you?"

"Never mind me. This is my blunder, and my work to set it straight."

I tore the cushions from the carriage of Don Manuel. The ethics of stripping a carriage I was supposed to have stolen bothered me not.

Through an error, I had brought a lovely girl and her faithful maid into trouble, and I was willing to throw the last vestige of respectability that remained to me to the far winds in order to undo, as far as possible, the effects of what I considered my stupidity.

In five minutes I had a comfortable place for the two young women to sleep, in a room totally apart from where Balover and I were, and then I took a single carriage-seat and made a pillow of that for the young American.

He soon dropped off into a deep slumber, and I went outside to smoke.

It would be merely a series of repetitions to tell the procession of thoughts and fears that went through my mind as I sat there. I saw the rising sun. In the first dim light, I made out the two horses standing where I had left them.

This recalled to me the fact that they had had nothing to eat or drink since leaving the stable of Don Manuel, and I unharnessed them and let them feed on the grass that grew along the avenue from the road to the house. I could not find anything like a pail or bucket to give them water from the well, and resolved to wait till daylight and then search for a stream I knew crossed the highway a little beyond the burned house.

I sat on a stone, musing, when I heard some one moving near me. I turned and saw that it was Mary.

"Hist!" she said quietly. "I came through the room where the young man is asleep. It's bad wounded he is, I think. An' Miss Kate is asleep with the exhaustion of it all. An' I wanted to spake to you alone, anyway."

"What is it, Mary?" I asked.

There was another stone near the one I was sitting on, and Mary sat down on this.

"Doctor," she went on, "this thing is more serious nor ye think. I don't understand the dago talk down here, but there was a fine row in old Don Manuel's house whin Miss Kate tuk the part of Isobel. Well, I've seen men grow wild wid the anger in them, but the old Don Manuel takes the batter from ivery one. He goes crazy, so he does. An' Miss Kate cried, an' Isobel cried. An' there was a stormy scene, an' we started for the depot, an' here we are. An' now, what I wanted to ask ye is, what are we goin' to do. Sure, this is no place for a delicately brought-up girl like Miss Kate."

"Mary," I answered, "I am as much in the dark as to our future course as you are. Balover says every path of escape is cut off. We cannot go into any town, therefore the railroad is out of the question. We have three horses, and, I suppose, might steal another, but the committing of an actual crime goes against me."

"An' do ye think it is as bad as the boy says?"

"I fear it will prove to be worse. I was thinking, just before you came, that if we could get hold of the paper that is published in Santa Rosa, we might learn just how the land really lies. But I don't know how to get it.

"I am willing to take the risk to go into Santa Rosa, but it would simply be folly. The clothes I have on would betray me in a moment. My arrest would follow, and you would be no better off here."

"Indeed, if we must wander like outcasts in the wilderness, we can't lose you, doctor, dear. An' Mr. Balover can't go."

"He might be able to go after a while, but he would be shot, and then we'd be no better off. I guess we'll have to let the paper go."

"An' Miss Kate—she couldn't go."

"No; of course not. She has not fully recovered from the shock of finding herself in this place; and to permit her to risk her health, and perhaps her life, in attempting to get a newspaper, would be cruel."

"Indeed it would, doctor. An', then, who's to go but meself? I'll go."

"You!" I stared at her. "Why, Mary, you don't know the language of these people."

"I know a language that'll take me through to where I can get a paper, an' that's all I'll need. But I'll ask ye this. Where is the river they call the Rico?"

"The Rico? Why — the Rio Rico rises in the Sierras, just west of Santa Rosa, and flows right into the bay. Why do you ask about the Rico?"

"Well, I'll not be tellin' ye now. But I think I'll take a trip to see the source av this river. What d'ye call it, now?"

"The Rio Rico."

"Sure, it sounds like a brand av coffee. But I'll ask ye now for a horse."

I stared at the girl in amazement.

## CHAPTER VII.

### ANOTHER DISASTER.

MARY O'DONNELL was not more than twenty-five years old. She was a handsome Irish girl, large and strong; and now that she had developed this amazing coolness, and determination to assist us where none other of the party dared, I was lost in admiration.

There was some plan in Mary's mind that she had not confided to me, and I doubted even if Miss Arnold knew what the girl intended to do.

"Balover's horse is not as good as either of Don Manuel's," I said. "I'll take his saddle, and give you one of the banker's horses. But, my dear girl, I don't want you to run into any danger. It may be better for all of us to keep together."

"An' we will," she responded firmly. "But before any av ye l'ave this place, I must see where the Rio Rico—is that it? I must see where the Rio Rico rises in the— Say the name of thim mountains again."

"I don't know the local name for the mountains. Sierras simply means a mountain range, or mountains. But what on earth are you going to do there, Mary?"

She looked at me, her bright eyes shining in the suddenly brilliant morning, and she laughed.

"An' did ye never hear av the magic spring av the Rio Rico?" she asked.

"I never did," I replied, more than ever mystified.

What this girl, but a short time from New York, knowing nothing of the country about Santa Rosa, nor a word, scarcely, of the language, could know about a magic spring at the fountain-head of the Rio Rico was too much for me.

"Well," she said, and she laughed more merrily than before, "I'll tell ye all about the magic spring. 'Tis said that a young girl, if she goes to the spring alone, and drinks the pure, sweet wather, will see her lover at once."

I stared in consternation at her. Surely the troubles of the night had turned her brain. She was mad. It would never do to let her leave us with her brain in any such muddle as that.

I knew that the source of the Rio Rico was generally known to be a wild, rugged, and, as some said, a ragged country. I knew that there were wild beasts in the Sierras. And there were wild men all through that section.

"I don't think you'd better go, Mary," I said. "It is not safe. You'll not see your lover at the magic spring."

"Don't ye, then? Well, we'll say no more about it. But, anyway, which is the road?"

"Why—take this same road a few miles, and then branch off to the left on a rough mountain trail till you reach it. That's all I can tell you, Mary. Now I must see about something to eat. I've my revolver, and I suppose, somewhere on the *hacienda,* there are some of the cattle or animals left. Keep watch over Miss Arnold till I come back."

A mere nod was my answer. I went to take a look at Balover. He was sleeping soundly. I left him as quietly as I could, and, in passing, glanced at Mary.

She still sat on the same stone, but she had a letter in her hands, reading it. I could see that her brow was wrinkled, as though she was striving to make better sense of something than her knowledge permitted.

I went on, and, paying no further attention to any one in the old ruin, I started in pursuit of something to eat.

I was gone perhaps half an hour. Good luck attended me from the first. I had plenty of ammunition for my revolver, and when I returned I carried with me the carcass of a small sheep, which I knew would serve as food till we had all got our several heads together and decided what to do.

As I approached the old ruin I saw Miss Arnold out at the well, getting a drink of water. She glanced up at me as I drew near, and I saw that her face was anxious looking.

"I see you have been hunting," she said. "I suppose we must eat to keep up our strength. I can't find Mary. Have you seen her this morning?"

"Why—yes. I was talking to Mary just before I went away—less than three-quarters of an hour ago. She had been speaking rather incoherently, I thought. Wanted a horse to go to a magic spring at the head of the Rio Rico and see her lover."

"Her lover? In this part of the world? Impossible. But one of Don Manuel's horses is gone."

With a queer feeling at my heart, I rushed to the front of the old ruin where the horses had been grazing. One of Don Manuel's fine team was there, and so was Balover's horse. But the other one and Balover's saddle and bridle were missing.

In consternation, I stood looking all around.

"Then, she has gone," said the voice of Miss Arnold at my elbow.

"Why—what else can we conclude?" I asked. "I spoke of letting her have one of Don Manuel's horses because they were fresher than Balover's. But I fancied I had dissuaded her from going."

"It is a hard matter to dissuade her from doing anything she decides to do," said Miss Arnold. "I don't exactly understand what the girl is thinking of."

"Has she a lover?"

"Why—she has several young men who pay her attentions in New York. But that is a far cry from this."

"I should say so. I wish you and she were safe in New York this minute. I shall go after the girl, of course."

"I don't know what to say to that," said Miss Arnold nervously. "I am not accustomed to adventure; and if you go after Mary, that leaves me with a wounded young man to take care of. Of course, I have known Jimmy Balover a long time, and expect he will eventually marry my cousin Isobel. But what shall I do if the soldiers come? Only tell me what to do, and I am willing. I am not afraid—only ignorant."

"What's the row?" asked Balover, at that moment coming out to where we stood.

We told him the situation.

"There is only one way," he said. "The poor girl has lost her head through terror. You take that horse of Don Manuel's, and fetch her back. She won't ride as fast as you do. We'll have breakfast ready by the time you return."

Balover was undoubtedly as well qualified to prepare a portion of the sheep for cooking as I was, and I really felt great alarm for the safety of the Irish girl. So I hastily rigged up a bridle by cutting the reins of the team, and then, with a small blanket for a saddle, started off.

I had no way of knowing which direction Mary had taken, except the conversation I had had with her about the mountain road to the left.

I had ridden this road, but not as far as the source of the Rio Rico. I

reached the rough trail and turned off to the left.

I could not make fast time. The horse stumbled and stepped on loose, rolling stones, and at times I thought the animal would break a leg and fall, and perhaps break one of mine.

I got into a rough region, thickly wooded and constantly rising, with coarse grass growing in clumps and boulders scattered about. It was not a pretty country. I wondered if Mary had traversed it in safety.

Suddenly, from behind some rocks, a half dozen ragged ruffians leaped out into the trail and grasped my horse.

"Pardon, *señor,*" said one who seemed to be the leader, "you will come with us."

"Let me alone," I said in Spanish. "I am in search of a demented girl who has lost herself in the Sierras."

"Very good, *señor.* But you will come with us."

I hesitated, not knowing whether my identity was known to them or not. My hesitation was their opportunity. Two of them seized me and dragged me from my horse.

"Do not fight, *señor,*" said the leader. "We are too many."

There was logic in this; and even if I killed two or three, there were still enough left to kill me. I obeyed them. And led by two, guarded by two, and followed by the others, I was marched away from the trail into the mountain forest.

(*To be continued.*)

# NEAR NEIGHBOR TO DESPAIR.

By ROBERT RUSSELL.

A college story of a freak act to order capped with a consequence that dismayed.

PORTER'S position in college had not been an easy one during the four years he had spent trying to make the most of the advantages he had striven so hard to obtain. He was some years older than the majority of the class with which he was about to graduate, and his seriousness, which had become a habit with him while he had been teaching in a small district school, had kept him out of most of the social gatherings which delighted the hearts of the younger men.

His face showed the difficulties through which he had passed, and he appeared far from the college man as he is typified in fiction.

To-day, however, as he sat in his inexpensive room, with a small notice printed on a black-bordered card before him, there was a great deal of happiness expressed on his countenance.

"I suppose," he thought, "this should not mean so much to me—but it does mean a whole lot."

The little card was merely a statement that Mr. Porter had been elected to the most exclusive of the university societies, and should be prepared to carry out the instructions of the representative who would call upon him, in order to test his fitness to become a member of the sacred order.

This social success, coming at a time when he was about to finish his course at the university, and the surprise it brought on account of his comparatively small acquaintance with the three hundred other members of his class, was surely something to feel a moderate elation over—and elation Porter did feel.

The smile had not left his face when Graham, one of the younger instructors under whom Porter had labored, and for whom he had a strong liking, entered his room unceremoniously. It was a strange thing, this friendship between instructor and student, but the nearness of their ages and a somewhat similar past preparation for college had early drawn the two together.

"Why the smile?" asked Graham.

"Perhaps I am unduly elated," replied Porter, "but I've been elected to the X.O. Society—and am waiting in fear and trembling for my initiation."

"I'm awfully glad, Dick," and the

other showed real pleasure in his congratulations.

"I suppose when I get my orders to do some fool stunt during the initiation my dignity will have to go by the board," continued Porter.

"It won't hurt you," replied Graham, laughing. "I went through the ordeal unscathed."

They had passed from a discussion of the ridiculous things different societies had made their neophytes do, and were speaking of the approaching competitive examination for a high prize Porter was most anxious to win, when a knock came at the door.

In response to Porter's "Come in," there entered a tall, serious young fellow, who stood looking around him for a moment and then said:

"Mr. Porter, I believe?"

"Why so formal?" inquired Porter, recognizing in the speaker one of his own classmates.

"I desire to see you alone for a few moments," continued the other, with an apologetic look at the young instructor.

The latter, evidently understanding the situation, hastily rose, and with a "Good day, gentlemen," left the room.

Resuming his serious manner, the newcomer again addressed Porter.

"I am delegated by the X.O. Society," he explained, "to instruct you as to what you will be obliged to do in order to test your worth to our satisfaction."

And then he went on to give Porter most minute instructions concerning certain matters, which instructions Porter was to carry out to the letter.

With difficulty Porter retained the dignity evidently expected from him, and listened to the remarks of the other carefully.

"Am I not pretty old to be obliged to do these things?" he dared to ask.

Disdaining to answer the question, the tall young man turned to leave the room.

"There will be some one watching you constantly," he concluded, "so be sure you do not miss a detail."

And he was gone.

With rather an ashamed smile, Porter closed the books on the table and began slowly to change his clothes for the oldest ones he possessed—and they were pretty old.

When he had completed his toilet by donning a very disreputable felt hat, he looked at himself in the mirror. No hard-working college student stood there now, but a grave-faced laboring man, to whom it would seem that any sort of work would be a blessing.

Sneaking out of his dormitory with as little noise as possible, and avoiding the eyes of fellow students, Porter started on his journey toward the most fashionable part of the college town. After half an hour's walk, he reached a corner where stood another young man of his class, somewhat similarly attired.

Approaching him, Porter bowed low, raised his right hand to his heart, and spoke in a loud voice.

"I'm an electric light," he said.

"Go out," quickly responded the other.

Curious passers-by stopped to listen to the conversation—many of them being in ignorance of its significance.

"I'm a gas-jet," returned Porter.

"Go out," again came from his companion.

"Don't blow me out," said Porter, with well-simulated fear.

And then the two started on a walk up the broad avenue, Porter in advance, repeating at intervals the information that he was some sort of an illumination, the other following, with the insistent command to cease casting his light upon the world.

For over a mile they walked thus, and finally the second man stopped, turned, and retraced his steps, while to Porter there came a gaudily dressed young fellow, whom Porter also knew well, and who took from under his arm a large cloth bag.

They stood facing each other a moment, and then, in a high tenor voice, the gaudily dressed young man sang to the serious-faced Porter this refrain:

"If you won't go out at once, at least obscure your brilliance—If you won't go out at once, at least obscure your brilliance."

At the conclusion of which ditty he handed the bag to Porter and walked away.

Feeling that he looked the part of a rag-picker, and humiliated more than he had ever expected to be in his life, Porter

started for the final scene of the ridiculous performance.

To a distant part of the city he hurried, looking about him for the place he had been instructed to visit, and keenly anxious that the ordeal should be over.

At last he came to a large residence, which at one time had evidently been one of the sights of the city, but which now seemed to be rather carelessly looked after. Approaching the back door, Porter gazed with some awe at the lawn which surrounded the place. A maid-servant responded to his ring.

"Can I have the old rags and papers scattered about the place," he asked her, "if I pick them up?"

"Well—sure," replied the woman. "I guess it won't hurt the looks of the grounds any."

Without more ado, Porter started with feverish haste to gather together and place in the cloth bag he carried all the stuff he had mentioned. He did not remember how long it took him to complete his task, or whether he confined himself to his instructions or not.

He only knew, as he walked rapidly away with the full bag, that he had never been so hot and uncomfortable, and had never carried such a strange burden.

At any rate his task was over, and he could now return for the final act of the farce.

It took place at the corner of the street, where the tall young man who had given him his instructions met him.

"You have done well," was his greeting. "And now be seated and obey me."

But Porter would not have minded, by this time, had his commander told him to stand on his head, and he faithfully obeyed the other's ridiculous instructions to the letter.

"Now, take this to your room," continued the autocratic person, "deposit it on your table, and leave it there until you are allowed to dispose of it."

Again Porter resumed his hurried way to his room, and at last, worn out and almost a nervous wreck, he placed the bag where he had been instructed and sank into a chair.

"What nonsense," he thought, "but I —I'm rather glad I had the nerve to carry it through."

A change of clothes and a short rest put the young man in shape once more to resume work on the examination the result of which meant so much to him.

The winner of this contest was considered the "big" man by the earnest students and professors alike, and was almost sure of a fine position as instructor in the subjects covered by it. As Porter was entirely dependent upon his learning for his future livelihood, the winning of this prize would place him beyond worry on that score.

It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that he worked all night in preparation for the test which came on the morrow.

His serious thoughts were occasionally lightened by a contemplation of the large cloth bag which reposed, according to instructions, on his table.

All the next morning he slept, and when he entered the examination at two o'clock he felt that he was as well prepared to meet the questions propounded as it was possible for him to be.

## II.

It was some days later, and Porter had not received word from the all-important examination, nor had the X.O. Society seen fit to relieve him of the ugly bag which still graced his table, when the tall young man again called upon him. It was with a laugh that he greeted Porter to-day, and together they talked over the ingenious methods of fun which the society had contrived.

"It must have been pretty hard on you," said Porter's caller. "You've rather kept out of those things during your college life."

"Oh, it was all right," laughed Porter, "but I don't like the sight of that bag."

"I forgot all about it," rejoined the other. "Let me dump the stuff into the fireplace—you can have a conflagration."

And he suited the action to his words by lighting the mass of stuff, which immediately blazed up as if eager to obliterate itself.

At that moment Porter's friend Graham, the young instructor, entered the room and stood in wonder before the fire, which the season of the year made a strange sight.

"Some old stuff I wanted to get rid

of," explained the young man as the other man took his leave.

The instructor then turned to Porter with his hand outstretched.

"I want to be the first to congratulate you," he said. "I have just come from Professor Jordan, and he asked me to tell you that you had won the prize with a truly remarkable paper—the best they have had in years."

To the young man who had worked so hard for a standing in college and to obtain the prestige that this victory would give him, no words could have been as welcome.

"I—I won?" he stammered, and visions of the joy his success would bring those at home rose before him.

"Yes," continued Graham, "and the beauty of the thing is that they say your answers were absolutely perfect—Professor Jordan told me he did not believe any student in the college would be able to have the subject so thoroughly mastered."

"It *was* hard work," replied Porter.

But his friend was gazing again into the fireplace, where the ashes of the old rags and papers which Porter had picked up lay smoldering. Toward the front of the hearth lay an unburned scrap. Slowly and wonderingly Graham approached and picked it up. Then he turned to his friend.

"I don't wonder at your success," he said, and, without giving Porter a chance to reply, turned and left the room.

"Graham spoke very queerly just then," thought the young man; but this could not take from him the happiness his achievement had brought. A letter to his home was his first thought, and was soon written.

He had returned to his room after mailing this, when there came an urgent knock at the door, and Porter opened it to admit Graham and Professor Jordan.

Their faces were grave, and that of Porter's friend expressed sorrow and anxiety.

"Porter," he began, "I felt it my duty to go direct with this matter to Professor Jordan, and he has deemed it best to come to you before consulting the college authorities. Oh, Dick, how could you do it?"

In amazement Porter looked from one to the other.

"What in the world have I done?" he asked.

"Young man," began the white-haired professor, "Instructor Graham found *this* in your fireplace, where you probably supposed it had been burned. How did you get it, and how do you explain its presence in your room? Of course, I cannot award you the prize—and you will probably not be allowed to get your degree from college."

Before the horrified eyes of the young man Professor Jordan held the printed examination-paper in answering which Porter had done so well.

He could not speak for a moment.

"I—I never saw that paper before. It—it is not the one used in the examination, you see—for it has somebody's writing on the edges."

"*My* writing, young man. It is one I made notes on the day before the examination, and misplaced somewhere—but thought nothing of. This explains your fine work. You knew what the questions were to be."

"But, on my honor, professor," protested Porter, "I did not see that paper before the examination. I never laid eyes on it till this moment."

"Then how came it on your hearth?"

Then Porter remembered the cloth bag.

"Where do you live?" he asked eagerly of the surprised man.

"Do not trifle—this is a very serious matter," said Professor Jordan.

"Oh, tell me," beseeched Porter. "It *is* important."

"I live in the large—perhaps a slightly dilapidated—place on the outskirts of the city," replied the other, with dignity.

"And do you know if a poor-looking man picked up the débris about your place a few days ago?"

"One of the servants said something about it," admitted the professor.

"Well, I was that poor-looking man," laughed Porter, "and was compelled to do it as a society initiation stunt. That paper must have blown on the lawn and been picked up by me with the other stuff—I never noticed it, I was so excited—"

"Remarkable," murmured the professor, looking at Graham.

"But nevertheless you found it the day before the contest and have had it ever since. You could not have failed to no-

tice it. Why did you bring it home with you?"

"Wait a moment, please," and Porter rushed from the room and into the arms of the tall young man who had been the cause of the trouble and was about to knock at the door.

"Just the man I was going for," cried Porter. "Will you explain to Professor Jordan and Instructor Graham how I came to have that bag with its contents in my possession all this time?"

Wonderingly the tall fellow did as he was asked, to the astonishment of the two college officials.

"But how do we know that you have left its contents undisturbed all this time?" asked Graham.

"I can answer that," said the tall fellow. "I saw him pick the stuff up without glancing at it—and then as part of our foolishness I made him seal the bag up—and just a few moments ago I unsealed it and dumped the stuff in the fireplace—"

"Is it all right?" asked Porter eagerly, his whole frame rigid with tremulous expectancy.

The white-haired professor turned to the young man.

"I belong to the same society myself," he said, "and I guess we won't take any of the credit away from so exemplary a student."

Porter is now instructor under Professor Jordan.

# NOT FOR SALE.

By ELBERT D. WIGGIN,

Author of "Nobody's Fool."

**The series of misadventures set on foot for one Austrian lieutenant of hussars after he had fallen in with an American party of three.**

## CHAPTER I.

### AT FIRST SIGHT.

"THERE is the woman I am going to make my wife!"

Across the wide, green field, brilliant with sunshine, a perfect thunder of applause was echoing and reechóing. In the stands, and behind the ropes which restrained the watching multitudes, thousands of people were clapping, stamping, giving vent to enthusiastic "Bravas!"

A moment before the scene had been one of intense and expectant silence. The crowning event of the field day which was ending the Austrian army's annual review and maneuvers was to be decided, and all Vienna hung breathless upon the outcome.

Even the tall, soldierly figure of the gray-haired emperor had leaned forward from where he sat in the royal box, surrounded by his glittering staff, to watch the test with an eager and unconcealed interest.

It was a perilous jump which had to be made—perilous for even the most expert and daring rider; and already a dozen contestants had failed to negotiate it, some by reason of unlucky falls, others because their mounts ingloriously refused to make the trial.

Then, while the crowds murmured in disappointment and chagrin, and a slight frown darkened the emperor's brow, a new contestant, gallant and youthful, cantered out upon the field, to be immediately recognized and greeted with rapturous acclaim.

Count Laszlo Chegnay had already won many laurels that day, enough to clinch his title to the championship for that year; and hence, although he was eligible to this event, no one had expected him to jeopardize his assured triumph by the risk of a final failure.

Nor had he intended to do so. Indeed, he had retired to the stand, and was making his way through the thronging spectators toward a group of his friends, when the incident occurred which served to change his purpose.

Little Horowitz, of his regiment, stood

up in a neighboring box, and signaled frantically to him.

"Oh, Chegnay!" he called. "Just a minute."

And then, as Laszlo stepped over toward him, he added: "I want to present you to Miss Van Brunt, of New York. She will not be content until she has had a chance to add her congratulations to the others you are receiving."

The champion glanced quickly up to see an exquisite, vivacious face smiling at him, and a slim, white hand frankly extended in greeting.

He bowed low. Then, as the lady moved aside to make room for him, entered the box, and took a seat next to her.

No need for him to question who was Miss Van Brunt, of New York. For a month little else had been talked about at the clubs and in society save her impending visit, and many a scion of an impoverished noble house had been looking forward to her advent, wondering if his quarterings and princely name would be sufficient lure to win her multiplied millions.

Even Chegnay's own father, the proud old general, sorely put to it to maintain the state required by his position and ancient race, had not been above indulging in certain hints to his heir as to the advisability of contracting a wealthy marriage.

"You are popular and gifted, my son," he was wont to say. "That should go far, but you must remember that in these latter days money is king. No matter what your talents, or your abilities, you will need gold in order to achieve your ambitions, and I, alas, have none to leave you."

It was not hard to draw an inference from such counsel. Circumscribed by the conventions and traditions of his class and profession, dependent solely upon his meager pay as a lieutenant of hussars, what other chance was there for the young man to acquire wealth save by the marriage route?

And Laszlo, heart whole and fancy free, carelessly acquiesced in the suggestion. Without being especially conceited, he believed that he could marry well, as the phrase goes; and had no doubt but that sooner or later he should do so.

But not yet, he told himself. His debonair, bachelor life was too sweet to be given up in a hurry. First, let him have his fling; then he would settle down to domesticity and a serious career.

As he took his seat beside the pretty American girl, however, the thought flashed through his mind that here, in all likelihood, was the woman who would lead him to meet his father's desires.

Charming, beautiful, gracious, she would make an admirable Countess Chegnay, one who could aid him by her tact and suavity in his climb to eminence. And, above all, she wore about her brows the halo of unmeasured riches; for the little, silent man who sat in the back of the box, and who had vouchsafed no other remark than a curt, "Glad to meet you, count," was Van Brunt, the mighty copper king, the possessor of one of the great fortunes of the globe.

Yes, Chegnay reflected, this was probably his chance; for he could not be blind to the flush of excitement on the girl's cheek, the sparkle of interest in her eye, to the fact that she had turned her shoulder upon all the other cavaliers who had formed her court, and was devoting herself exclusively to him.

He breathed a half sigh for the jolly bachelor days he saw receding from him; then, bowing to his destiny, strove to render himself as fascinating as he knew how to his fair companion.

Nor could he deny that there was a certain interest to the game, once he had entered upon it. The passion to excel, which was one of his chief characteristics, was awakened in him, and lent a spice to his wooing.

Here was a prize which all the titled youths of Vienna—nay, of all Europe, for that matter—were bending their best energies to win—dukes, earls, barons, even princes of the blood royal—yet he, a mere Hungarian count of the second rank, might lead her to the altar.

The zest of competition mounted like wine to his brain as he trained his dark eyes to look romantically into hers, and let his voice express a thousand things more than his tongue was uttering.

Oh, Chegnay knew how to play at love! That gipsy strain he had inherited from somewhere in his blood gave a

passion and poetry even to his most ordinary conversation with a woman—a trait that had made him one of the most accomplished flirts in all the emperor's army. No matinée hero along Broadway could use his eyes to better advantage, or throw more yearning into his tones, than this graceless rogue when he saw fit to exert his powers.

Surely and inevitably the American girl was yielding to his spell. His pulses tingled, his heart thrilled with exultation as he saw how she was hanging upon his words, drooping her eyes and growing shy before his increasing ardor.

The conquest was almost too easy, he thought, with a touch of impatience. He would have preferred a little more excitement to the chase.

She, too, of a sudden seemed to realize this, and, drawing herself together, made a desperate effort to recover her poise. She strove now to flout him a bit, to reassert her supremacy, to appear wilful and capricious.

"Why are you not entered in this contest?" she demanded, as one after another of the riders failed to make the dangerous jump.

She did not say so openly, but the look which accompanied her words asked the further question: "Is it because you are afraid?"

He knew she was taunting him of a set purpose, in order to gain control of herself; yet still he stirred uneasily under the irony of her slightly lifted lids.

"Oh, I felt that I had done enough," he tried to excuse himself. "I wanted to give some of the others a chance."

"Then you believe that you could also win this event?"

"Believe that I could win it?" he laughed arrogantly. "I wish that I could be so certain of—"

He let a bold glance of his speaking eyes finish the interrupted sentence.

Miss Van Brunt blushed, but she did not desist from her aim.

"There is nothing in the world I covet so much at just this minute," she said, with a narrowing of her lids, "as the ribbon which will be given as a trophy for this jump. I want it as a souvenir of to-day and my visit to Vienna."

The challenge was obvious. Chegnay rose promptly to his feet and, with a stiff little military salute, left the box.

When he reached the saddling paddock the last contestant was just being carried off the field on a stretcher after his nasty tumble, and the master of ceremonies, a corpulent colonel, was swearing terrible German oaths of eight and ten syllables.

"*Donnerwetter und Blitzen!*" he shouted savagely, surveying with bloodshot eyes the muddy and discomfited aspirants. "Now the jump will have to be given up. There are no more to compete. It is a disgrace to the army. Oh, if I was only back at ten stone again, I'd show you myself; but you, *verdammte—*"

Again he broke into a choking tempest of objurgation at the luckless riders.

"Don't burst a blood-vessel, colonel. I'll make the jump for you," said a calm voice at his elbow, and he turned, with a jerk, to behold Chegnay.

"You!"

"Yes. I am eligible, you know."

"But—but," sputtering, "the contest is over. I have already sent a man to make the announcement."

"Call him back. Or else send another man to correct the statement. I tell you," with a flash of the dark eyes, "that ribbon is going to be taken down."

With a wave of the hand the colonel despatched a second messenger to the field; then, in an ecstasy of relief, he clasped the lieutenant to his portly breast.

"Oh, my boy, my boy," he almost sobbed, "you shall have the finest horse in my stable to do it; and if you win—if you win, he—my splendid Solferino—shall be your own!"

Meanwhile the crowd, including the displeased emperor, was impatiently waiting, for the first messenger had been overtaken in time to shut off his announcement, and no one knew just what was causing the delay.

At last, however, the trumpet sounded, and out through the gate trotted a magnificent chestnut, wide of chest, clean of limb, long of neck, his coat gleaming like satin in the sunlight—the very picture of a jumper.

But the tumultuous acclaim which rose

up from the multitude in a great surge of sound was not for the horse, superb as he was, but for the rider—a lithe, graceful figure in his high, tasseled boots, red trousers, tight blue jacket, and with his little, round, astrakhan cap set jauntily on one side of his head.

"Chegnay! Chegnay!"

The shouts of enraptured, almost frenzied welcome to the champion fairly tore the atmosphere into strips, yet Laszlo paid small heed to the uproar.

With merely a perfunctory obeisance in the direction of the royal box, he turned his mount and galloped easily away across the field toward the jump.

Thoroughly he let Solferino inspect every part of it, in order that the intelligent animal might know exactly what was expected of him.

"Now," thought the eager spectators, "he will try it."

But such was evidently not the rider's intention—not just yet.

He leaned from his saddle to speak a word to the attendants on either side of the jump; and a gasp of surprise came from the waiting throngs as they saw that at his behest the top rail was to be lifted a couple of inches.

This eleventh-hour contestant was going to dare even more of an obstacle than that which had balked his fellows!

Again he studied the situation, and inspected the ground on either side of the leap, only to give them another heart thrill, for, at his command, the bar was once more lifted a couple of inches.

People turned from one to another with dilating eyes. Was the man crazy? There was no need for him to adventure such a hazard. All he had to do was to succeed where the others had failed.

Even the emperor turned, with a curl of his Hapsburg lip, to mutter to one of his staff: "This is mere bravado and foolhardiness. He will simply break his neck."

But a moment later every one saw what was Laszlo's intention; for once more he gave a direction which caused the rail to be raised. It stood at eleven feet, ten inches.

If he cleared the jump at this height he would break the world's record!

With a little nod of satisfaction he turned Solferino about, and walked him back toward the starting point.

There were no shouts or cries of encouragement now. The interest was too intense. Over the breathless crowd a silence settled down, in which one could almost have heard a pin drop.

And then, with the blast of a trumpet, the gallant chestnut started. Down the course he came, his hoofs drumming upon the cropped turf, his rider guiding him lightly with only the merest touch upon the bridle.

But, just back of the jump, Chegnay's hands suddenly tightened, with a grip like steel, as he crouched low in the saddle, and Solferino, understanding the mute signal, gathered his mighty muscles together for a supreme effort.

It was like the uncoiling of a watch-spring. Up, up, up they went, horse and man as one creature—a streak of tawny light surmounted by a whirl of scarlet and blue!

Up, up, went Solferino like a swallow taking flight; and then, with his long legs curled under him, forward. Over the hedge of brush, over that recklessly upraised top bar, over the ditch upon the other side—clip and clean without a touch of hoofs, a jar, or a stumble—and landed in triumph!

For a moment the audience held its breath; then there arose such a clamor of applause as made all the previous tumult seem no more than a whisper in comparison. Men and women alike, royalty and the people, shouted, huzzaed, waved their hands and threw up their hats in a very insanity of approval.

But the victor, quietly sitting his heaving steed, tried to appear indifferent to it all. He must seem quite unconcerned, he told himself, merely casting a nonchalant smile in the direction of the beauty who had inspired his daring achievement.

Even as he gazed in Miss Van Brunt's direction, though, his eye was caught by a little, plainly clad figure sitting farther back in the stand. And out of all that sea of faces, hers so pale, with eyes still wide and lips tremulously parted, as she must have watched his jump, drew and held his gaze.

Like a statue Count Laszlo sat his horse and looked. Across the inter-

vening space, over the heads of the hurrahing crowd, his glance and the woman's met and intercepted.

Quiet and demure, she was to the radiant Miss Van Brunt as the modest violet to the rose; yet this dashing lieutenant of hussars, this winner of a world's record, this untouched survivor of flirtations by the score, although ignorant of who or what she might be, then and there laid his heart at Muriel Bonner's feet.

There was nothing of the debonair boy about Chegnay now. In the twinkling of an eye he had become a man, and with all of a man's determination he voiced to himself his settled purpose:

"There is the woman I am going to make my wife!"

## CHAPTER II.

### THE APPLE OF DISCORD.

As soon as Laszlo had seen Solferino, now his own, safely disposed in a stall, and was able to tear himself away from the exuberant congratulations of the master of ceremonies, he hastened toward the grand stand.

Ordinarily, he would have spent an hour or two in gloating over the fine points of his acquisition, and seeing that the chestnut lacked nothing for his comfort, for Chegnay loved a good horse above almost anything else on earth.

Ordinarily, too, he would have yielded all the time desired by his generous benefactor; but now a feverish quest was spurring him away, constraining him to give but scant and ungracious attention to both his mount and its giver.

Who was she—this girl of the parted lips and Madonna-like brow? He must find out at once, must meet and become acquainted with her before she had time to disappear. His eager spirit could not brook the idea of delay.

It was, therefore, at a gait approximating a run that he made the return journey from the saddling paddock, and forced his way impatiently through the crowds leisurely filing from the stand.

He had no eyes, no thought for anything but the object of his search, and consequently it came to him as an annoying interruption when he felt a light touch upon his shoulder, and turned to see the laughing face of Joy Van Brunt at his side.

"Whither away so fast, Sir Knight?" she bantered him lightly. "If you are hunting for me, the object on which to bestow the spoils of your prowess, here I am all ready to be crowned Queen of Love and Beauty."

But the champion was in no humor for jesting just then.

"Pardon me," he said hurriedly, his eyes wandering quickly away from her; "but I cannot linger just now. I am looking for—some friends, and I am afraid they will get away before I have a chance to intercept them."

She still detained him though.

"Won't you even stop for my congratulations?" she questioned, speaking earnestly now. "You must at least let me tell you how I admired your daring. The jump was magnificent—superb."

"Oh, thank you—thank you," indifferently.

It was plain that her approval counted for little with him. All he wanted was to get away.

A sparkle of resentment flashed into the beauty's eye.

"How interesting these friends you are seeking must be," she said a bit tartly. "Don't let me keep you from them any longer. But, before you go, may I not remind you of our compact?"

"Our compact?" He was still gazing hither and thither through the crowd.

"Yes. The ribbon, you know. Was it not to come to me?"

"Ah, yes. The ribbon. Of course."

But his rejoinder was purely mechanical. He was looking away from her, trying to peer around a group of passing people who momentarily impeded his view.

Suddenly a light flashed into his searching glance, and a long-drawn "Ah-h!" broke through his lips.

He turned abruptly to Miss Van Brunt, and grasped her by the arm.

"Who," he demanded, "who is the young lady coming this way—the one with the fair hair parted over her brow, I mean, and the hat with the gray veil twisted around it? You ought to be able to tell me, for she is evidently also an American?"

Joy Van Brunt followed the direction of his excited glance.

"Why, you certainly remember her, count," she exclaimed. "She was with me in the box when you were here before. Or, no; I recall now that she had just left with Captain von Altdorff to meet some friends of his farther up in the stand."

"But who is she?" Chegnay broke in impatiently.

"My, but you ought to be a Broadway conductor, with that 'Step lively!' way you have. Since you make such a point of it, though, that is my cousin and particular chum, Muriel Bonner."

"Muriel Bonner?" he repeated incredulously. "Not—"

"Yes," she nodded, "the American actress, who is to open to-night at the Burg Theater in the Teutonized version of our 'Mlle. Modiste.' You'd never think that a demure little mouse like that could take a Fritzi Scheff rôle, would you? But wait until you see her behind the footlights.

"So sorry you can't stay and meet Muriel, count," with a malicious twinkle in the glance she threw at him. "I see she is coming over to join me now; but, of course, those importunate friends of yours are awaiting you."

"Er—oh, no," he disclaimed hastily. "I am sure that my friends must have gone by this time, and, if you will permit me, I shall be only too glad to remain here and be presented to Miss Bonner."

She laughed a gracious assent; but, being a young woman of pertinacity, ventured to remind him as they drew aside to await the actress's coming that he had not yet endowed her with the coveted ribbon.

"I think I have fairly won it," she said, with a quizzical twist to her mouth; "for, if it is a prize for daring, look at me voluntarily introducing you to another woman. Besides, you promised it to me. So, as we say on our side of the ocean, 'Produce!'"

Chegnay impatiently fumbled through his pockets, finally bringing to light a crumpled scrap of silk. It was the trophy for which not half an hour before he had risked breaking his neck; but so full had his mind been of other thoughts when it was given to him, that he had stuffed it as carelessly away as though it had been a sample from a bargain counter.

With an equal lack of interest, he now held it out to his companion. His heart was beating in his throat, his whole attention was centered upon the graceful figure approaching them.

Miss Van Brunt tapped her foot a bit restively at his all too evident abstraction.

"'He threw the glove, but not with love, right in the lady's face,' eh?" she quoted *sotto voce*. "Well, not so you could notice it, my doughty champion—not with Joy Van Brunt."

She raised her voice slightly, and threw a touch of grievance into her tone.

"Is that your Hungarian way of paying a courtesy?" she pouted. "To hand over your gift as though it was a tip passed to a waiter? Thank you, Count Chegnay. You may keep your precious trophy."

Laszlo, recalled to himself, and smitten with compunction over his seeming rudeness, hastened to make amends, insisting, with a hundred apologies, on pinning the ribbon to her breast with his own hands. So it happened that the two were in a most lover-like attitude when the actress and her escort, the gray-mustached Captain von Altdorff halted beside them.

Chegnay, feeling rather than seeing the near presence of his divinity, and suddenly realizing how his devoted manner must appear in her eyes, raised up quickly, flushing with confusion, and thereby succeeded, of course, in making matters look even worse than they had been before.

There was a decided stiffness and embarassment on all sides as the introductions were made. The actress merely inclined her head slightly, and turned her eyes indifferently away.

Von Altdorff chewed his mustache and scowled blackly, while Miss Van Brunt, not having yet forgiven the late defection on the part of her cavalier, stood silently at one side enjoying the discomfiture of the hero of the day.

Herself a past mistress in the art of flirtation, the heiress easily saw which way the wind was blowing with Cheg-

nay, and although in their earlier passages her feelings toward him were no deeper than his for her, she was yet sufficiently a woman to want to make him suffer for so quickly transferring his allegiance.

"It will do the young popinjay no harm," she said to herself, "to get over the idea that he is so utterly irresistible, and for once have to crawl and grovel at a woman's feet."

Accordingly, with the skill of a practised tactician, she attached him to herself during the drive which the party took back to the hotel where she and the actress were stopping, and indeed made it appear in every way as though he were her enraptured adorer.

Laszlo squirmed and writhed to free himself of the coils which she continued to weave so cunningly around him, but in vain. Short of positive rudeness, he found it impossible to disengage himself from the false position; and so, fairly sweating blood at the thought of the impression his conduct must be making upon Miss Bonner, the drive was to him a veritable inferno.

Ah, those maids with whom he had so carelessly flirted in times past, whose soft hearts he had caused to palpitate with his sham tenderness and deceptive moonshine! This was the hour in which they were richly revenged.

Yes, if it was the heiress's intention to punish a recreant admirer, she certainly succeeded, but perhaps the lively maiden had still other fish to fry.

It might have been noticed that, engrossed as she seemed to be with Chegnay, she yet found time to cast an occasional furtive glance in the direction of Captain von Altdorff, where he sat stiff and frowning in their motor-car with Muriel; and the more he glowered at the luckless Chegnay, the more disgusted he seemed to become with her carryings on, the better satisfied Miss Bonner appeared to be.

Laszlo did not, of course, recognize the elder officer's annoyance. To his exalted vision there was but one woman in the world, and, if he thought of Von Altdorff at all, it was with a bitter envy for the chance the latter was having to monopolize Muriel's society.

So the little game of cross-purposes and mutual misunderstandings went on under a cover of seeming amiability and polite observances—Miss Bonner very quiet, and with a little, weary, scornful look in her gray eyes; the captain green with jealousy; Chegnay chafing and fuming under the constraint of Miss Van Brunt's favor.

Joy herself was the only one who really understood, and with all the strings in her hand, she was enjoying herself to the utmost.

Mischievously she amused herself by stirring up the two men to a very pitch of malice, hatred, envy, and all uncharitableness, but nevertheless she kept a watchful eye upon the progress of events, and just when the volcano she had been fomenting threatened to erupt, she tactfully proposed a change of their seating arrangements, so that at last Chegnay could have his Muriel, and the captain was beside herself.

This, perhaps, prevented open violence, but did little else to assuage the embittered feeling she had aroused, for Von Altdorff still nursed a resentful scowl, and the count was scarcely more at ease than he had been in his former misery.

He wanted to pour out his heart to this woman who had stirred him as he had never been stirred before; to lay bare his soul to her, and let her see, through the thousand and one ways which love has of manifesting itself, that she was "it" with him; but how could he?

After his equivocal behavior with the heiress, what stock was likely to be taken in his sincerity? Muriel would simply look upon him as one of those conceited fops who think they have but to toss a handkerchief to win any girl they may choose, and would thereby imbibe a still deeper contempt for him than that which he could already see lurking in the curl of her dainty nostril.

Consequently he restrained, with iron grip, the ardor of his spirit, and sitting beside his companion with blameless decorum as they whirled down the Fraenzens Ring, contented himself by pointing out to her the public buildings and objects of interest which line that most stately street in Europe.

More self-composed now, he could no

longer be oblivious to the glances of animosity which Von Altdorff kept throwing toward him from time to time, and naturally ascribed them to rage at seeing another engage the attention of the actress.

"*Ach,*" he reflected, "so the stern old Felix is likewise smitten. Well, no wonder. Even a more impervious heart than his, if such a thing could be imagined, could hardly fail to surrender to her charm and delicacy."

Nevertheless, the reflection gave him decided pause, for Von Altdorff was by no means a rival to be despised.

Rich, of as good blood as any in the empire, stainless in his private reputation, and with a brilliant military record, Felix von Altdorff could long ago have wed almost anywhere he chose, but middle life found him still a bachelor.

It was not that women did not care for him, or that he himself was a misogynist, for none could be more chivalrous or felicitous than he in his dealings with the other sex, and he was a marked favorite in the society of the court. It was simply that he had never yet met the ideal of his dreams, and until she came, or even though she never came, he was determined for her sake to hold himself free from entanglements.

As might be surmised with a man of such caliber, there was nothing he detested more than the flirt of either sex; and, therefore, it is small wonder that he regarded Chegnay's apparent dereliction with such disfavor, especially so since it was being borne in upon him more and more every minute that Joy Van Brunt was the ideal for whom he had waited so long.

Laszlo Chegnay had been a sort of protégé of his, a member of his mess, and a chum in many ways despite the disparity of their years. He had felt an almost brotherly interest in the career of the lad, but now he had to confess to himself that the milk of kindness in his veins was rapidly turning into vinegar and gall.

Nor was the younger man's affection and respect for his superior officer less shattered by the discovery which he thought he had made.

"He shall not have her!" Chegnay's heart wildly declared. "He has all the advantage on his side, with his wealth and his prestige, and the favorable impression he has been able to make on her, while circumstances have made me appear a cur in her eyes. But, for all that, I swear I will yet win her. She is mine, mine, mine—even though I have to kill the man who would take her from me!"

Great oaks from little acorns grow. The American heiress's desire to take revenge for the slight she thought had been put upon her was like to evoke results of which she little dreamed.

She forgot that she was not dealing with the tepid, matter-of-fact beaus of Fifth Avenue and Newport, but with men of the passionate south, of a race which still thinks in terms of medieval romance.

Ignorant of the tempest she was stirring up, she created fresh discord between the two men as she whirled her automobile up to the door of the hotel and gave them their dismissal.

"Off to your club, now, you two," she said gaily, "to discuss us, as we shall discuss you. I see you are loath to leave Muriel, Captain von Altdorff, but she really must have time to get ready for her première to-night; while I"—she gave an arch glance to Chegnay as she touched the ribbon upon her breast—"will gloat over my trophy. *Au revoir,* then, to both of you. *Au revoir.*"

She fluttered into the hotel, with the actress at her side, and the two erstwhile friends were left upon the sidewalk. For a second they glared into each other's eyes; then, with a stiff, almost imperceptible bow, turned and stalked away in opposite directions.

## CHAPTER III.

### A RESORT TO ARMS.

Little Max Horowitz, that incorrigible gossip, ran into Chegnay in the foyer of the Burg Theater that night, and burst into a high cackle of amusement.

"Well, it's hardly necessary to ask you for an opinion on *l'Américaine,*" he grinned. "Those gloves betray your sentiments stronger than words."

Laszlo glanced down at his hands, and

to his surprise discovered what the other meant. His gloves were split into tatters as a result of the enthusiastic applause he had been giving the performance.

With a self-conscious blush, he hurriedly peeled them off, and thrust them into his pocket.

"Yes," he confessed shortly, "I like the performance very much." Then his tone became eager: "What is the general verdict, Max?" he questioned. "What are the critics saying about her?"

Horowitz twirled his mustache.

"Oh, they seem to think she'll do," he replied indifferently.

"Do?" burst out Laszlo indignantly. "Seem to think she'll do? Are the fat-witted fools blind that they can't see such a genius has not graced our stage in a generation? Why, that drum-song alone should have carried them off their feet. When before have you seen such grace, such witchery, such dash, such—"

He choked with the vehemence of his protest.

Horowitz gave a low whistle as he waggishly shook his head.

"Here, here," he cried, "isn't this going a bit strong, even for you, my dear boy? This afternoon you were breaking world's records and all that sort of thing in order to win the favor of one lovely creature; and now you are all up in the air over another. We all know you are susceptible, old chap; but two affairs in one day is rather crowding the limit—that is, unless you are planning to emigrate to the ladies' own country and turn Mormon."

Laszlo made haste to moderate his transports; for he had no desire to become the subject for ridicule, and he knew how his companion's chattering tongue could give a most absurd twist to the incident.

He could not forbear, however, from adding to the few adverse criticisms he felt impelled to make:

"On the whole, though, I stand by my original assertion, and say that Vienna has seen no such star in a dozen years."

"Well," admitted Horowitz judicially, "to be honest, I am pretty much of the same opinion. No matter what the critics may think or say, she has undoubtedly made a wonderful hit. Why, I even caught grumpy old Felix von Altdorff, who never has a good word to say for any actress, muttering *'Wunderbar! Wunderbar!'* under his breath."

"Von Altdorff?" sharply.

Now, as a matter of fact, the captain's ecstatic murmurs had been inspired by the beauty of Joy Van Brunt as he stood in the back of the house watching her queen it in her box, and not by the performance of the actress at all; but Horowitz could hardly be expected to understand that, nor could Chegnay well be blamed if a pang of jealousy shot through him at the recital of the matter.

"Von Altdorff!" he repeated tensely.

"Yes. I don't wonder that you are incredulous; but it's true, all the same. He's hard hit at last, I tell you. Why, didn't you see how he literally sat in her pocket all the time out at the games this afternoon? Even now he is flitting hither and thither about the theater like an uneasy ghost, unable to stay in his seat.

"And, by the way," struck with a sudden thought, "what has come up between you and him? I thought you were the original Damon and Pythias; but when I asked him to-night why he didn't go up and join you in Miss Van Brunt's box, he threw a black look at me, and said that if he desired the society of a puppy he would go to the kennel."

The mischief was done now. This irresponsible tattler had completed the work so thoughtlessly begun by the lively heiress. The regard built up by months of friendly association and comradeship tumbled like a house of cards.

A dark flush spread up to the very roots of Chegnay's hair, and his eyes give a quick, ominous flash.

"This goes beyond endurance!" he exclaimed passionately. "You'll act for me, won't you, Horowitz?"

"But, my dear boy," expostulated the gossip, alarmed now that he saw the harm he had wrought, "don't be so hasty. Von Altdorff meant nothing, I am sure. He will explain, of course, if asked. Probably he was only joking."

"Joking!" Laszlo laughed harshly. "I have no liking for that sort of humor. No, it was a premeditated insult, and Von Altdorff shall answer to me for it."

Horowitz saw there was no use in attempting to argue with the angry man.

"Well," he said, "I can only hope for both your sakes, then, that Felix will apologize. To say nothing of the emperor's regulation against dueling, a combat between such swordsmen as you two is something which ought to be prevented. You are both too good—"

"Apologize!" broke in Chegnay, spitting out the word as though it were an offense to his lips. "There will be no apology in this case. I shall make that certain by becoming the challenged party. And when Von Altdorff is in front of me, no matter what the cost to myself, I shall kill him!"

And leaving his companion gazing after him, aghast at the vengeful tempest he had aroused, the young lieutenant turned sharply on his heel and strode swiftly back into the auditorium.

Hither and thither he glanced over the crowd, seeking the man whom he now regarded as his rival and bitterest enemy; but his quest was in vain, for, as he presently learned, Von Altdorff had shortly before been summoned from the theater upon official business.

A gas-tank in course of construction out at the arsenal, where the government was preparing to conduct some tests as to the practicability of dirigible balloons, had exploded with somewhat disastrous results, and Captain von Altdorff, who was in charge of the experiments, had hurriedly left for the scene as soon as he had been apprised of the accident.

The probabilities were that he would not return to town much before morning; so his hot-blooded antagonist, compelled to postpone an immediate encounter, banished the thought of the disturbing captain from his mind for the present; and, since the intermission was now over, smilingly rejoined Miss Van Brunt's party in her box.

With the volatile temperament of a true son of the South, no one would have suspected from his manner or bearing that this was the same man who only a few moments before had so melodramatically sworn to kill.

Easy, polished, gallant, and gay, he was the life and soul of the little party the heiress had gathered together, as he was afterward at the supper given at one of the big restaurants in honor of Muriel's triumph.

Here, at last, he had the opportunity to redeem himself somewhat in the actress's eyes; and, as may be surmised, he spared no pains to establish himself in her good graces.

And finding, as he had been led to suspect from her stage performance, that under that nun-like exterior lurked a spirit as sprightly as his own when once it was awakened, it was not long before he was laughing and chatting away with her as though they had been friends for years.

Indeed, he realized now that much of what he had taken for disdain that afternoon was simply shyness and trepidation in regard to the evening's ordeal ahead of her.

To-night, radiant with success, she was like a different being, and every moment Laszlo felt himself becoming more hopelessly enthralled. He knew that never in his life had he appeared to better advantage; for never had he conversed with any one so sympathetic and congenial.

Accomplished no less as a musician than as an athlete, he could meet her intelligently upon her own field; and taking this as a starting-point, he speedily found that they had a score of tastes in common.

Even when they disagreed upon a subject, it was a sheer delight to him to hear her advance opposing arguments—a pleasure to confess himself routed at her hands.

Only once was there a distasteful moment among the many that he spent in her company that evening; and that was when she observed innocently enough:

"Isn't it too bad that Captain von Altdorff cannot be with us to-night? I met him for the first time this afternoon; yet already I quite adore him. He is a great friend of yours, is he not?"

Chegnay frowned slightly, but turned the subject so deftly that she did not realize until some time afterward that he had evaded an answer; and then the rather peculiar manner in which he had received her question recurred to her to set her wondering.

Being with Max Horowitz at the moment, she happened to mention the cir-

cumstance to him, and asked for an explanation.

"Count Chegnay and the captain really are almost like brothers, are they not?" she questioned. "At least, everybody always seems to bracket their names in speaking of them."

Horowitz smiled a shade grimly.

"*Were* almost like brothers," he corrected her, unable, as always, to hold his tongue. "Just at present, about the only brotherly feeling they entertain is that which Cain cherished for Abel.

"In fact," and he lowered his voice to a confidential whisper, "Chegnay has already requested me to act for him; and, unless I am greatly mistaken, the two will have it out before many hours have passed."

She raised a quick, incredulous face to his.

"Not a duel?" she gasped.

He nodded.

"Can't be anything less, since Chegnay declines to accept an apology."

"But what is it all about?" she demanded. "Everybody spoke of them as such good friends. You yourself admit that the quarrel is something very recent. Surely, surely, something can be done?"

He shook his head.

"I am afraid not; neither of them is a chap likely to give way, now that matters have gone so far, don't you know. It's a bad business, though, I am free to confess. The way they feel, one of them is almost certain to get his finish, and that means years in prison or exile for the other."

His callous way of speaking seemed, somehow, to add to the horror of the thing in her mind. Involuntarily, she glanced across the room to Chegnay, so handsome and debonair as he leaned over to address some light remark to the heiress; and she pictured him lying stark and stiff upon the trampled turf, or else a hunted fugitive with the brand of Cain upon his brow.

"Oh, it must be stopped!" she broke out impulsively. "There must be some way of bringing them to see reason. Tell me, I beg of you, Lieutenant Horowitz, what it is that has caused their differences?"

He hesitated a moment, surveying her quizzically through his narrow eyes; then his desire to appear knowing overcame his discretion.

"Well," he said slowly, "of course there is an ostensible reason — there always is in such matters—but the real cause, if I am not mistaken, is the all too potent fascination of—*Mlle. Modiste!*"

"You mean—" she faltered. "But, no, that is impossible. Why, they scarcely know me. I never met either of them before this afternoon."

"Ah, *mademoiselle,*" murmured Horowitz, "but this is Austria, where both love and jealousy are plants of rapid growth; and you—forgive me—are very beautiful."

But Muriel was not to be cajoled by compliments.

"It is absurd," she declared, an angry red spot showing upon either cheek. "I will not permit such folly. Since you and the other associates of these two madmen refuse to interfere, I shall have to take matters into my own hands."

"You! What can you do?"

"I shall appeal to Count Chegnay. I shall beg him for my sake to let this affair go no farther. If, as you say"—a wave of color swept up over the pallor of her cheek—"he really cares for my opinion, he will not deny my intercession."

She sprang to her feet and looked eagerly about the room for the count; but Horowitz laid a detaining hand upon her arm.

"It is too late, *mademoiselle,*" he said. "Chegnay has already left. I saw one of the waiters give him a signal a moment ago, and he immediately made his adieus to Miss Van Brunt. The signal, I suspect, was an intimation that Von Altdorff had come into the restaurant; and if that be so, an encounter has by this time been rendered unavoidable."

For a moment she drooped and swayed unsteadily upon her feet, feeling herself helpless in the grip of circumstance.

"Yes," repeated Horowitz, not without a certain relish, "a resort to arms will now be unavoidable."

"Not so!" she cried passionately, straightening up under stress of what seemed a sudden inspiration.

"Not so? Alas, *mademoiselle,* it

must be so. You cannot go to them now; nor would they listen to you, even though you did."

"Ah, but I was no longer thinking of appealing to them. I have another string to my bow."

## CHAPTER IV.

### MURIEL'S "OTHER STRING."

In the Prater—Vienna's great public park—there is a secluded spot not far from the Haupt Allee, or main avenue, which is screened from observation upon three sides by a thick growth of fir-trees, and on the fourth by a pagoda-like kiosk, which the authorities have allowed the Hungarian gipsies to erect, and where one may lounge of an evening listening to their weird music.

The glade itself is carpeted with soft turf, whereon in the afternoon these lithe and swarthy Tziganers frequently give exhibitions of juggling for such few pennies as they may be able to gather from their tolerant audiences.

But in the early morning hours, if report speaks true, a very different company is apt to be found in the retired close; for here, they will tell you, the young gallants resort to heal the wounds which they deem their honor has sustained, and to exact reparation for the hasty word or taunting epithet exchanged over the wine-cups.

So eager was the impulsive Chegnay to face his hated rival and wipe out the stain of that insulting "puppy," that he refused to abide by the conventions for such affairs, and insisted upon an immediate meeting.

"I will not wait until daylight," he protested angrily, when Horowitz, as his second, tried to argue with him. "The moon is high and full; what more do we need? And since I am the challenged party, with the right to select time, place, and weapons, I demand that the *rencontre* be now, the place the Prater, and the terms *au mort!*"

It was true, as he had said—Chegnay was the challenging party. Determined that no apology should interfere, and that the combat should be fought to a finish, he had so maneuvered that the challenge came *to* instead of *from* him.

Horowitz had guessed aright when he intimated to Muriel that the signal passed to Laszlo by the waiter was an intimation that Von Altdorff had entered the restaurant.

Guessing that his antagonist would probably come there upon his return from the arsenal, the angry man had requested that he be notified at once of the captain's arrival; and the manager of the place, knowing of the friendship between the two, had in all innocence complied with his wish.

Merely stopping then to bid his hostess good night, Laszlo hurriedly left the room, proceeded along a corridor, and, as he had expected, encountered his man just emerging from one of the coat-rooms.

Then, without a word, he stepped quickly up to Von Altdorff, and with the back of his hand contemptuously struck the latter across the mouth.

The captain, his eyes flashing fire, sprang forward to take instant reprisals; but bystanders intervened, and the two struggling, panting men were held apart, and speedily drawn away, each by his own body of supporters.

There could be but one outcome to the affair, however, under the code of ethics existing in Vienna; and in less than half an hour Chegnay, as he had anticipated, was waited upon by a friend of the assaulted officer.

The nature of his answer has already been outlined in the terms which he dictated to Horowitz; and since Von Altdorff had no alternative but to accede, it was not long before the two, with their seconds at hand, were facing each other in the glade of sinister reputation back of the gipsy kiosk.

While the preliminaries were being arranged, the two principals, their tunics and vests removed, stood a little to one side; Chegnay, dark and slender, the very picture of a young *Romeo,* his gray-mustached adversary shorter of build, but with a muscular, bared arm, which showed he would well be able to give account of himself.

The moonlit glade within the circle of dark, whispering firs looked indeed like a stage set for the scene of a play, with the two waiting combatants, their seconds conferring earnestly in the center

of the open space; and the doctor, a familiar figure at such engagements, busying himself over a leather case which he had opened, and which contained a glistening array of instruments.

On a deal table which had been brought out from the kiosk were laid a couple of spare rapiers, to be used in case the weapons of the combatants should break; and close beside them was a case of dueling pistols, to be resorted to in the event of either side suffering such disablement as to prevent the further use of swords; for this, it will be remembered, was to be a duel to the death.

Like a setting for the stage the whole thing looked, indeed; but the audience consisted only of a couple of black-eyed Tziganers, who lounged from a rear window of their establishment and watched the proceedings with breathless interest.

"On guard!" The rapiers snarled like living creatures thirsting for blood in the first swift interchange between the rasping blades.

Von Altdorff was easy and self-possessed, but with a cold, half-cynical glitter in his steely eye, which showed that all his fighting blood was up; Chegnay, more impulsive, betrayed his excitement; yet he, too, was wary, not allowing his eagerness to interfere with a careful attention to his guard.

Incomparable swordsmen they both were, and well matched; for the dangerous composure of the one was counterbalanced by the brilliancy and dash of the other.

A connoisseur might have attributed a shade of advantage to the elder man from the fact that Chegnay would probably tire first; but, on the other hand, there was strong possibility that one of the latter's lightning-like thrusts would reach its mark before his wrist was fatigued or his freshness abated.

He forced the fighting from the start, his slender blade flashing now here, now there, in the moonlight, like a venomous serpent seeking to strike home, and his agile body stooping, swerving, giving back with easy grace as he avoided his opponent's point.

It was like a combat between a tiger and a bull, the one all litheness and activity; the other stolid, watchful, but no less quick to move at the sight of an opportunity, and equally threatening did the chance present itself aright.

So they circled and played back and forth across the little arena, mutually giving and taking ground as the exigencies of the fence required; the only sounds which broke the silence their hoarse breathing and the rasping of the steel, or the metallic clash of their hilts.

As yet neither side had gained any appreciable advantage; but now of a sudden both seemed to become possessed of a determination to end the contest.

As if by mutual consent, each recoiled for a moment; then came together again in a furious interchange. Caution was thrown to the winds; the only thought of either seemed to be to reach a vital spot upon his adversary at no matter what cost to himself.

Their intertwined blades whirled now here, now there, in a coruscation of glints. Cut, parry, and lunge; lunge, parry, and cut! There was not a second in which the life of either was worth a moment's purchase in that desperate set-to.

Von Altdorff, utterly discarding his earlier tactics, was now fighting as openly and fiercely, and to the full as brilliantly, as his more impetuous foe. Frenzy was the only word to describe the wild violence of their engagement.

Horowitz and his brother second stood by with mouths fairly agape. Both had witnessed many a passage at arms; yet neither had ever before seen anything to compare with this, either in ardor of attack or in the utter disregard of consequences displayed.

They knew, however, that no two men could long withstand such a reckless mêlée. Sooner or later, one of them must meet his fate. They felt that it could only be a matter of clock-ticks now until the duel was inevitably decided.

But while they waited for the finish, and while their principals strove yet more madly for supremacy, a crisp, commanding voice from the corner of the gipsy café suddenly broke upon the silence.

"Stop that foolishness!" it ordered.

Little Horowitz, conceiving that the

authorities must have learned in some unaccountable way of the affair, and were about to interfere, sprang forward, and with his sword drove up the blades of the two duelists.

Then he and the others turned expectantly toward the spot from which the interruption had come.

To their surprise, it was no officer of *gens d'armes,* or provost captain, who strolled out into the moonlight; but, with a cigar in the corner of his mouth and a silk hat on the back of his head, the short, tubby figure of Cyrus Van Brunt, the American millionaire.

"I guess," he drawled quietly, "it's about time for somebody with a shade of common sense to operate on this market."

## CHAPTER V.

### THE "BARBARIAN" TAKES A HAND.

"BUT he is a barbarian, I tell you!" excitedly declared Lieutenant Horowitz to a knot of his cronies, as he drained his third brandy-and-soda. "An utter barbarian!"

It was a half-hour later, and the gossip was volubly detailing his experiences to a group of shocked and wondering comrades, laying special stress upon the lamentable lack of ceremony in the conduct of Mr. Van Brunt.

*"Ach, du lieber Himmel!"* he gasped, bitter memories of that scene in the Prater surging back upon him. "What boorishness!"

"You would not believe it, my friends. Nobody would believe it. But I, Horowitz, was there, and I assure you that every word is the absolute truth.

"When he so discourteously interrupted the little affair between our brother officers, I, as being in charge of Chegnay's interests, stepped up to him and expostulated.

"'Pardon me, *mein Herr,*' I said graciously but firmly, 'this is a private quarrel — a dispute of honor between two gentlemen. Since you can be in no wise concerned, will you not politely withdraw until it can be settled?'"

"And did he not at once accede?" questioned the listeners, raising incredulous eyes to him.

"Accede! Am I not telling you that he is a barbarian, a Goth, a Vandal? No, he simply sneered at me—sneered at me like this." Cyrus Van Brunt was no beauty, but he certainly was entitled to an action for libel on the alleged imitation of his expression into which the narrator here screwed his face.

"Sneered at you?" demanded the breathless chorus.

"As I say, he sneered at me, and in that abominable language of his remarked:

"'Run along, bub; I've got no time to waste fooling with you. I've come out here for a heart-to-heart talk with those two idiots out in the field; and since I guess we won't need you any longer, you'd better be chasing home.'"

"What happened then?" Horowitz had paused to recuperate his shattered nerves by another resort to the bottle.

"What happened then? Oh!" sadly, "I—I chased."

*"Ach!"* a dozen throats indignantly voiced the guttural exclamation. "Do you mean to say you did not challenge him—did not demand immediate satisfaction for so gratuitous an insult?"

"Oh, yes," gloomily, "I challenged him, of course. *'Mein Herr,'* I said defiantly, 'you shall fight me for that.'"

"And did he refuse?"

"Refuse! Have I not already said that the man is impossible? He took me by the back of the neck as one might seize a child, and twisted me around—so. Then said he to me:

"'I've already told you that I had no time to bother with you, Johnny. If you don't clear right out and quit pestering me, I shall lay you across my knee and spank you; while, if I hear any more of this silly fight talk out of you, either now or in the future, I shall perform the operation at high noon on the steps of the American legation!'

"And he would do it, too," averred Horowitz with unquestioning faith. "You would understand, if you had heard his voice. Oh, yes; the man is plainly a barbarian."

The actual happening was very much as he described it; and as he hurried off with that terrible threat ringing in his ears, Mr. Van Brunt turned curtly to the other second, who had stood by

listening in open-mouthed horror to the colloquy.

"You'd better 'git,' too," he observed crisply; and the man lost no time in following Horowitz's example.

Cyrus Van Brunt had a way with him, when he chose to wax authoritative, which did not invite discussion.

A single wave of his hand, and the doctor likewise vanished. He himself and the two swordsmen were left the sole occupants of the moonlit glade.

With lowered points, yet glaring as fiercely as ever at each other, Chegnay and Von Altdorff were both frankly puzzled.

After the interruption they had held their positions, and being too far off to overhear what had passed, only knew that they were suddenly bereft of seconds and an attending physician.

They were as eager as ever to continue fighting; but to do so under the circumstances was contrary to all the rules, while it was equally impossible for them under the conventions to exchange a word with each other, or for one combatant to leave the field without the sanction of the other and his second.

Indeed, ridiculous as it sounds, they were so hidebound by tradition and punctilio that the morning would still, no doubt, have found them there futilely glaring at each other had not the American millionaire intervened to relieve their quandary.

"Hallo, boys," he observed, strolling jauntily out across the grass. "I suppose you are a little surprised to see me butting in on the game; nor am I a spoil-sport as a general thing. But, by jingo, the way you two were lighting into each other when I came up, one of you was liable to get hurt, don't you know?"

His breezy manner, and the bizarre view he took of the furious fighting in which they had been indulging, so astounded both the combatants that for a moment neither of them could speak; then Chegnay managed to gain his breath sufficiently to rejoin stiffly:

"Pardon me, Mr. Van Brunt, but you are a stranger here, and I do not think you understand. This is an affair of honor between myself and Captain von Altdorff, upon which no third party has a right to intrude. I must ask you, therefore, to leave the field and call back our seconds, so that the matter may be properly decided."

"Decided?"

"Yes, sir; decided."

"But, Lord bless you, it's decided already," chuckled Cyrus. "I'm referee here, and I declare it a draw, with all bets called off."

Laszlo gave an impatient toss to his head.

"This is not a time for joking, Mr. Van Brunt," he returned sharply. "As I said before, you do not understand what you are doing; but—"

"Oh, I guess I understand well enough. I've seen some of this knife-play between hot-headed sports before, when I lived in the West — only out there the boys used dirks or bowies instead of darning-needles," with a contemptuous glance toward the rapiers. "Yes, I understand. In fact, I understand so well that I say this insanity has got to stop right here and now."

There was a different quality to his voice as he finished—a quick, commanding flash to his eye, which seemed somehow to raise to heroic mold the little man with the cigar tilted between his teeth.

Neither Chegnay nor Von Altdorff knew that a clamoring mob of a thousand men had once been held at bay and cowed by that single voice and eye; yet each felt instinctively the power of the man, and involuntarily bowed to it.

For a moment both of them were silent; then Von Altdorff, struck afresh by the impudence of this interruption, straightened up.

"But what have you to do with our quarrel, *monsieur?*" he demanded icily. "How do you obtain the right to interfere? The matter does not concern you."

"Oh, yes, it does," demurred Cyrus, cocking his cigar at a slightly more aggressive angle; "or, at least, the young ladies in my charge, which amounts to the same thing. Don't think for a minute that I am losing my beauty sleep, or traipsing around through the wet grass, on account of either of you. It's because the girls are mixed up in this thing, and because I don't choose to have

their names connected with a scandal, that I am taking a hand."

"Not so—" Chegnay started to speak; but Von Altdorff's coldly precise voice broke in upon his flurried explanation.

"You have evidently been misinformed as to the cause of this dispute," he said. "I am fighting Count Chegnay because he struck me in the face."

"And I, Captain von Altdorff," added Laszlo quickly, "because he called me a 'puppy.'"

"Exactly — ex-actly," with sarcastic emphasis. "I've heard that there must always be some flimsy pretext for these shindigs in order to 'protect' the lady's name; but, Lord, boys, what's the use? It'd be common gossip all over Vienna by ten o'clock to-morrow morning, and next day it'd be in every home paper, with head-lines a foot wide. I can see right now the sort of smear the yellow journals would make out of it."

"But—" Both the combatants were trying to speak together.

"Hold on—hold on! I know just what you would say. But will either of you swear to me on your honor as a gentleman that the real trouble isn't on account of one of my girls?"

His keen, quizzical glance searched their two faces, and before it both men reddened and dropped their eyes.

"Ah, I thought I was not mistaken." He paused a moment.

"Now, I'll tell you, boys," he went on more genially, "you're on the wrong tack. This sort of thing may be all right over here or on the stage; but the butcher business isn't just the card to put yourself next to a sweet, clean U. S. A. girl of the present vintage. If it was, I'd take mine out to the Chicago stock-yards and marry 'em to a couple of pig-stickers, who at least have sense enough to get a piece of money out of their job.

"Not that I'm saying, mind you"—he qualified cautiously—"that you fellows have got any particular show to win out under any circumstances. But I do want you to understand this much—and you can take it straight from me—if either of you had laid the other out to-night, neither Muriel nor Joy would ever have looked at the survivor again.

"Take it easy, lads," he counseled. "It's not carving your rival up into steaks that's going to appeal to either of my girls; it's the showing them you're men capable of ruling your own spirits. So, call this bout a misdeal and shuffle up again for a fresh whirl of the cards. Come, shake hands now like good fellows."

There was a certain hard-headed practicality, a breezy scorn for their antiquated chivalry in the little man's sermon, which made both Chegnay and his opponent—wedded though they were to the usages of their class — vaguely ashamed of themselves.

They could see that the American, for all his contempt of the duel, was not wanting in a very decided sort of courage, and it began to break upon them dimly that perhaps his might be a higher sort than theirs.

Still they resisted his cheery urging to be friends, and doggedly hung back from each other.

"I have been struck," muttered Von Altdorff obstinately; "and that I forgive to no man."

"And I have been insulted," chimed in Chegnay; "called a 'puppy' in the presence of witnesses."

"Pshaw!" laughed their intermediary, "if I was to go fighting duels with every man that called me a dog, I'd be busy sixteen hours a day for the next ten years. The lick, I am free to admit, is a more serious matter; but still, you'll have to confess, captain, that the 'puppy' you used made it pretty near coming to you.

"I'll tell you," an equitable solution suddenly striking him; "we'll charge 'em up one against the other. Credit the clip on the jaw against the 'puppy,' and balance the account. That squares everything up to date; and since I've already declared this fencing-match a draw, there's nothing more to be said. Now, will you two shake hands?"

Chegnay, the more impulsive and generous of the two, reached forward, willing to comply; but his late adversary waved him back.

"No," he said almost sadly, "I realize the force of Mr. Van Brunt's argument, and I am willing to regard my honor as satisfied; but I am older than you, Count

Laszlo, and I cannot change so readily. You have the heavy advantage of youth over me in the competition upon which we are embarked, and I do not forgive you for it.

"No," he repeated with a shake of his head, "I hold you no grudge; but I cannot now meet you in friendship, and I will not take your hand. Perhaps some day, when this is all over, I shall be glad to clasp hands with you again; but not yet, not while—"

His voice broke under the stress of his emotion, and with a gesture of the arm he turned and strode hurriedly off.

The other two stood watching him as he made his way, stiff and erect as ever, out toward the avenue.

"Still a little sore," commented Van Brunt thoughtfully; "but he'll come around all right. Just let him alone, my boy, and you'll see. Mark my words, he'll be only too ready to 'make up' inside of a day or two at the outside."

But, in spite of this easy prophecy, many a week was to elapse, and many a strange thing to happen, before the hands of Chegnay and Von Altdorff were again clasped in friendship.

## CHAPTER VI.

### NOT FOR SALE.

One afternoon, about a month after the duel, old General Chegnay—retired from active service now, but with a good deal of virility still apparent in his tall, spare frame, and in the poise of his leonine head—sat in his old-fashioned study at the family apartments on the Schwartzenberg Platz. He was contemplating with a frown a paragraph in one of the society journals.

The periodical in question was one of a class given over to the retailing of "spicy" personal gossip, and ordinarily the haughty old warrior would not have touched it with a pair of tongs. But to-day, having taken one of his infrequent trips down to the barracks, he had unfortunately run into Max Horowitz; and certain matters cropping out of the interview between them concerning which the general evinced a strong curiosity, he had been referred to this source for further details.

Nor did he fail to find them; for, as he turned to the very first page, his eye lighted upon an item which, although the identity of the persons mentioned was thinly veiled, could, he felt certain, point to no one other than his own son.

With an ejaculation of anger, he thrust the offending sheet from him when he had finished and sharply rang the bell.

"Franz," he said to the gray-haired servitor who appeared in answer to the summons, "as soon as Count Laszlo comes in, you will tell him that I wish to see him here at once."

Then he leaned back in his leather-covered chair, and with his eye grimly fixed upon a map of the heavily mortgaged family estates, waited.

It was not long before Laszlo cantered smartly up to the front door, and flinging Solferino's bridle to a waiting groom, ran hurriedly up the steps.

He had an engagement to take dinner with Muriel that night at one of the resorts outside the city, and he was all on fire to get out of his uniform and be away.

Consequently, he hailed the message old Franz delivered to him upon his entrance with anything but dutiful submission.

"My father wants to see me, eh?" and he slashed irritably at the side of his boot with his riding-whip. "Did it ever fail that when I was in an especial hurry he must needs send for me? Some question about the property again, I suppose, and one which can just as well wait for discussion until to-morrow.

"I'll tell you, Franz," turning to the old dependant, whom he had been able to wheedle all his life long, "just forget that you saw me, and I will creep in and out so quietly that he'll never know I have been home."

But for once, complaisant old Franz declined to shut his eyes.

"Pardon me, lieutenant," he replied, "but if I were you, I would not cross him to-day. He is in one of his blackest humors; and as for telling him that you did not come home, I'll warrant he knows already that you are in the house."

Even as he spoke, this surmise was confirmed; for at that moment the bell from the study jangled impatiently, and

Laszlo, waiting below, presently heard Franz being sternly questioned as to why the order given him had not been obeyed.

"H'm, certainly looks like something serious was up," ruminated the lieutenant, as he metaphorically girded up his loins to beard the parental lion in his den. "I wonder what particular misadventure of mine he has happened to stumble on now?"

But how far from the truth were any of the several conjectures in which he indulged while going up the stairs was shown by the quick start of surprise he gave on entering the chamber and seeing the journal there spread out upon the table.

For just an instant his glance wavered and he half shrank back toward the door, then he straightened up manfully, and faced the frowning general.

"You wish to see me, sir?"

"I do. I want an immediate contradiction from you of the statements made in this scandalous sheet."

The son cast a contemptuous look toward the scurvy review.

"I did not know it was necessary for a denial to be made to anything emanating from that quarter. Nobody gives any credence to such publications."

"Then you are willing to affirm that the declarations here made concerning you are utterly without foundation?"

Laszlo uncomfortably shifted his feet.

"That is a pretty broad order, is it not?" he said at last, "seeing that the article, if I remember it rightly, covers quite a number of my alleged exploits. Perhaps if you would tell me just what points of it you have in mind, I may be able to satisfy you."

"Well, then," probed the general, adjusting his glasses and picking up the paper as though he were afraid of soiling his fingers, "how about the statement that you have been paying such assiduous court to this American actress, to the detriment of your official duties at the garrison, that your commanding officer felt it encumbent upon him to administer to you a very severe reprimand?"

"Oh, that? Well"—a shade ruefully—"the colonel did give me a calling down, all right; but I don't think he was at all justified. All I had done was to be absent two or three times from guard-mount, and perhaps half a dozen times from parade."

"Humph!" All the distaste that a veteran martinet could express went into that scathing syllable. "But you have not yet fully answered my question. What I want to know is: Was this shameful dereliction due, as stated here, to the 'assiduous court' you had been paying, and all the rest of it?"

"No, sir. That is not entirely so. I suppose I was absent from duty on some of those occasions, because I was engaged in paying attention to these American ladies; but I deemed that no more than the hospitality properly due to strangers."

"American ladies?" emphasizing the plural.

"Yes, sir, Miss Bonner and Miss Van Brunt."

"But this article speaks only of one as the object of your devotion—the actress."

"As I told you before, it matters very little what that article may or may not say."

"Ah, but as it happens, I have more reliable information upon the subject—no less, in fact, than the word of one of your brother officers and particular intimates. According to him, you are in the company of this woman morning, noon, and night. I am even told that you fought a duel with Von Altdorff on account of her."

Laszlo registered a silent vow to wring Max Horowitz's neck the first time he met him; but that did not help his present dilemma. He saw plainly that there was no further use in attempting to hoodwink the old man, and therefore, after a moment's thought, came out into the open.

"Well, sir, and what of it?" he demanded.

"What of it?" harshly. "Nothing, possibly, if this were an ordinary occasion, or merely one of your customary infatuations; but, as it is, you are jeopardizing by your folly a very exceptional opportunity to settle yourself for life.

"This Miss Van Brunt"—and his voice lingered avariciously upon the golden name—"one of the greatest heiresses in the world, is head over ears in

love with you. Oh, you need not wrinkle up your brows. Lieutenant Horo—that is," hastily interrupting himself, "some one who has full opportunity to know assured me that such was the fact, and I have every reason to believe it. Did you not make that great jump on the field-day solely at her behest, and in order to present her the ribbon?"

"Ye-es, but—"

"Why, then, have you not followed up your advantage? I grant you that it is sometimes good tactics to arouse a little jealousy in such cases; but not to show an absolute indifference and neglect. Here is the girl, as I am told, ready with all her millions to drop into your mouth like an overripe peach; but you, forsooth, must spend your time philandering around with another woman, and that, too, right under her very nose. It would almost serve you right to lose her altogether."

"But, father, you are being entirely misled," protested Laszlo, when he was at last able to squeeze in a word. "Miss Van Brunt is my very good friend; but as for any stronger feeling—"

"Bosh!" scoffed the general. "Since when did modesty become one of your virtues? Of course, she seems indifferent when she sees you spending all your time at the feet of this other woman, and has no way of gaging your intentions.

"What you must do is to quit this shilly-shallying, and prefer a formal proposal for her hand. And the sooner you do it, the better. Do it to-day," carried away by his eagerness. "Promise me that you'll ask her to-day, Laszlo."

The old count, holding the Continental view of marriage as an alliance in which the practical interests are the first things to be considered, and with his heart set upon the restoration of his ancient name, saw nothing at all out of the way in this proposition.

Nor a month before would Laszlo himself have deemed it reprehensible; but the few weeks he had spent in the society of the frank, self-respecting American girl had served to change his notions on a good many subjects, and now his father's covetous tone grated on him.

"You seem in a great hurry to complete the bargain, sir," he said, a trifle bitterly. "Are you afraid of my salable qualities diminishing? It would be a pity if you had to mark me down as they do damaged goods in the department stores."

The general stared at him in amazement.

"Don't be silly," he adjured roughly. "Of course, I want to see you make an auspicious marriage, and here is such a chance as you will probably never have again. With Miss Van Brunt's millions, you could do everything for yourself and for"—he raised his eyes almost reverently to the framed map upon the wall—"the estate."

With a sudden surge of passion, Laszlo flung out his arms from his sides.

"The estate! The estate!" he burst forth violently. "That is all you think of, all you have ever dinned into my ears. I am a mere pawn in the game. My happiness or my wishes are not to be consulted. Nay, you would even condemn me to lifelong misery, sacrifice me without a qualm upon the altar of your cupidity. The only interest I possess in your eyes is that of being traded off for so many dirty ducats to reestablish the estate!

"But I tell you I will not submit," meeting the old man's stormy eye with bold defiance. "Here and now, I declare my independence. In every other respect I am ready to show you all the deference which a father has the right to claim; but I will marry solely and simply to suit myself."

By a hard struggle the general restrained an ebullition of his anger. His calm, however, was merely the calm before the storm.

"This outburst means, then, I gather, that you decline to heed my wishes and pay your addresses to Miss Van Brunt?"

There was a world of withering sarcasm in his tone; but the young lieutenant, with arms folded across his chest and head haughtily thrown back, gave no sign that he noted it.

"It does," he assented quietly.

"And am I also correct in surmising that this paper"—he again touched disdainfully the invidious sheet—"tells the truth when it intimates you intend bestowing the proud name of Chegnay upon this Yankee stage-woman?"

"That is my intention," resolutely, "provided she will have me."

"Have you reflected that such action must necessarily mean your resignation from the army, an exclusion from court, and the entire abandonment of your career?"

The seeming tranquillity with which he spoke completely deceived his listener.

"Oh, yes, father!" he exclaimed enthusiastically, "I have considered all those things, and I count none of them as anything, if Muriel will but have me. Indeed, I am quite ready to give up the idle, useless life of an officer of hussars, and do something worth while. I want to take a part in some of the world's big activities; and with her to aid and encourage me, I know that I shall succeed. I may even become as great a millionaire as Van Brunt—who can say?—and restore the estate with money made by my own efforts. There is nothing which Muriel and I may not do together. You must meet her, father, and come to know her; for I am sure that you, too, will love her, if once—"

"Silence!" The storm had broken at last; and even the young officer, used to the uncertainties of his father's temper, shrank back, appalled at its fury.

"Silence! Never dare to mention such a thing as bringing this actress into my house. I see that you are besotted in your folly, and will proceed to the extremes you have planned; but understand this here and now. The day you marry her you cease to become my son. You may have forgotten what is due to the name you bear; but I have not, and I would sooner cut my throat than receive as a daughter this creature of the footlights—this—"

"Don't you say it!" cried Laszlo, springing forward. "Don't you dare utter the foul name that is trembling on your lips!"

"What!" shrieked the old man, turning upon him in a veritable frenzy. "Am I to be ordered about like a lackey in my own house, and told by you what I may and what I may not say? Take that for your impudence!"

As he spoke, his upraised hand descended and fell sharply across his son's cheek, leaving behind it a scarlet mark.

The young lieutenant recoiled, his fists clenched, his eyes aflame. For a moment it seemed as though nothing could prevent him from exacting prompt retaliation.

Then, with a convulsive shudder, his arms dropped to his sides, and the tears of impotence blotted out the red mist before his glance.

"You have finished it!" he said hoarsely. "I am absolved now from any further filial ties. I cannot strike you back on account of your gray hairs, and I cannot challenge you because you are not only my father, but also my superior officer. Therefore, my sword is of no further use to me."

He unbuckled it from his side, and drawing it from the scabbard, snapped it in two across his knee.

"You warned me that I would have to leave the army, and threatened to cast me off as your son," he went on passionately. "Well, your prophecies have come true. I resign from the regiment, and I renounce you as a father, now and forever!"

And casting the pieces of his broken sword down at the other's feet, he strode defiantly from the room.

*(To be continued.)*

## TAKE THE WORLD AS IT IS.

TAKE the world as it is!—there are good and bad in it,
And good and bad will be from now to the end;
And they, who expect to make saints in a minute,
Are in danger of marring more hearts than they mend.

If you wish to be happy, ne'er seek for the faults,
Or you're sure to find something or other amiss;
'Mid much that debases, and much that exalts,
The world's not a bad one if left as it is.

*Charles Swain.*

# SOME POUNDS OF BUTTER.

By BURKE JENKINS.

A sailor ashore in hard luck suddenly finds himself saddled with a possession he does not want and cannot keep, but cannot sell, lose, or give away.

"WHY the grouch, Jack, bōy?"

"Why?" repeated Jack in rising and scornful inflection. "Reason enough. The ship Shining Light has sailed without me, and here am I, up to my neck in debt to a virago of a boarding-house keeper, and about enough chance of supper as I have of being President."

"Real, sure enough hungry?"

"Are you a friend?" replied Jack so solemnly that Dick Vance, himself a starving scribbler, took another notch in his own belt.

"I have an idea!" he cried, as he seated himself on Jack's sea-chest to elucidate.

"Keep it," growled Jack, still uninfected with Dick's fool optimism.

"No, I won't," replied the cheerful Richard, taking no offense. "The real trouble with us, Jack, boy, is we're not using up-to-date methods. Now, let's review the situation as it stands. That is, not counting myself; for I'm a proven failure, and, therefore, thoroughly equipped as an adviser."

Jack grunted, and Dick, taking this for sanction, continued:

"You are possessed of a pair of sea-boots, a suit of oilers, a southwester; these contained in the chest whereon I sit. Anything else?"

"I got an old revolver," admitted Jack in disgust, "but the mainspring's bu'st."

"Fine!" cried Dick. "Why didn't you mention the same before? It'll be the very thing."

"'Tain't worth two cents."

"Maybe not ordinarily. But now, let's see." Dick fingered into a tattered jacket. "I still have thirteen cents."

"That's lucky," replied Jack in the first show of good humor.

"It's exactly the sum required, to a cent."

And thereupon Dick ran out to the street and bought an evening paper of a raucous newsboy. He returned to Jack's room, most cleverly eluding, in doing so, the before-mentioned landlady.

"One cent gone," said he cheerfully, "but we're under way, as you nautical men phrase it."

Jack couldn't help falling into a little interest as Dick folded back the sheets one after another until he arrived at the "Exchange" columns. The items were headed: "Exchange Something You Don't Want for Something You Do."

"That pistol's something you don't want, isn't it, Jack?"

"Correct, so far," answered Jack.

"And what is it you *do* want, Jack, boy?"

"Something to eat!" yelled Jack.

"Right O!" replied Dick, using another sea term. "And," he continued, as he ran his eye over the "Miscellaneous" section, "here we are."

He thumb-marked an item and passed the paper over to Jack. Jack deciphered it:

> EXCHANGE some pounds butter. Too much for my own use. What have you? Answer without delay, addressing FARMER, Box 46, Down-town.

"There you are!" cried Dick triumphantly.

"But I can't eat butter alone!"

"Oh, man," went on Dick, "who said anything about eating *all* the butter? Didn't the worthy Ben Franklin start life with an extra pair of socks and a loaf of bread therein? The butter is to be your capital. I guess butter's easier to sell than a bu'sted gun."

"Maybe so," admitted Jack, "but how much butter do you think that farmer'll give for that old thing?"

Here Jack produced the dilapidated weapon and passed it over to Dick.

"Well, we'll see," said Dick, "and, furthermore, we're going to leave it entirely to him. This two cents will carry the letter I'll write for you. The pistol we'll send express 'collect.'"

"And the other ten cents?" inquired Jack interestedly.

"Goes for eatables until we hear from our transaction."

"Which'll be *never,*" said Jack.

"Jack," replied Dick, cut to the heart, "you seem to lose sight of the fact that, besides being a failure, I am something of a psychic. I *feel* we shall hear from this thing, and that soon. But I know you don't really mean it, so I'm not offended. Come on."

And he led Jack toward a free lunch.

II.

THE next day, late in the afternoon, Dick sought out Jack; for the forenoon he had spent looking for a job as reporter without really wanting it.

"Heard from the butter yet, Jack?" he cried cheerily, as soon as he had been furtively slipped through Jack's door.

"Naw, but I've been telling the old girl I was expecting something by express, and she seemed impressed like."

"Good for you! Improving every minute. I was in hopes it hadn't arrived yet, for I wanted the pleasure of helping you unpack the crate."

"Unpack the *crate!* Dick, there won't be enough of that butter sent, even if it comes, to grease one of my teeth."

Then it was that the street door-bell way below rang janglingly.

"There it is now!" cried Dick. "I'll sign for you, Jack." Whereupon the enthusiastic friend rattled down the flights while Jack went to his window, to be almost paralyzed with the realization that it really was an express-wagon there at the curb.

Two minutes thereafter it was a wheezing Richard that shuffled his way up the final flight and deposited a box, the shape and size of a Saratoga trunk, before wide-eyed Jack.

"Well, so help me, Davy Jones!" murmured the sailor.

"There now!" ejaculated Dick between wheezes. "I guess that there's a crate as is a crate."

"But what's the holes for?" queried Jack dubiously, as he eyed the box more closely.

"To keep the butter fresh, I reckon," suggested the friend.

On which Jack sniffed the air suspiciously.

"Fresh enough for axle-grease," he remarked in the tone of a doubter. "'This Side Up,'" he read. "What's that for?"

"Now you've got me," admitted Dick; "but here now, hand me your sheath-knife and we'll open the thing and find out."

Dick pried at the nails while Jack adopted the more strenuous and effective method of sheer strength to the planks.

Two small strips yielded to this treatment, whereupon, to their wild dismay, the two adventurers realized that they had but stirred up some lively aid from within the box.

"Bang—whang!" came two doughty raps at the box-end.

"Swish!" sounded the rending of the last remaining confine.

"By the prophet!" yelled Dick classically, as he went forward over the sea-chest, skilfully aided in the feat by as nobly a bewhiskered Billygoat as ever Pan boasted in his woods.

Jack buck-jumped to a safe corner, thought-collecting.

Dick rubbed a sore spot and groped before his eyes to clear the stars.

"Bill," the new member, fresh from temper-rising indignities, backed to a point of vantage, head lowered and red showing in his pastoral eye.

The recollection of events that happened then comes back only as a hazy blur. Jack has always stuck to his version of the way things happened, Dick to his.

But they agree on the most essential point, and that was that the new member, Bill, took up, assumed, and maintained absolute control of that room for a good quarter of an hour.

Two more bewildered and amazed personages than those two seekers after the "wherewith" for a meal graced not Manhattan that summer afternoon.

Back and forth went the pursuit race within the narrow confines of that front hall-room. Two articles alone escaped

Bill's onslaught: Jack's sea-chest (thanks to a good carpenter) and the gas-jet (somewhat b yond the bucolic's reach).

And it was not until both the scattered intelligences of Jack and his newspaper friend were coming to a slight recognition of realities, after they had managed to drag the chest before them into a corner, that Dick said softly:

"Jack, boy, would you mind slipping me last night's paper?"

Jack drew it from his hip-pocket, and Dick read feelingly:

"'Exchange some pounds butter.' Item one, correct, eh, Jack? 'Too much for my own use.' No doubt of it. Jack, boy, that there farmer is certainly no Rube."

Jack looked at Dick; then he looked at Bill. Then he looked again at Bill; for, foiled for the moment as he was, the goat was standing still enough for the first time for one really to get a good view of him.

"Say, Dick," quoth the sailor finally, after rubbing his eyes, "do you see anything on that there animal's horns?"

Dick looked. Sure enough, a somewhat tattered envelope of brown paper was tightly affixed to Bill's warlike headgear with a wire.

"Sh-h-h!" commanded Jack. "Just keep quiet a minute, Dick."

Slyly the sailor slipped off the rope that bound down the chest-lid, and softly he crept from behind the bulwark.

"Bang!"

But Bill had been deceived, for Jack side-stepped the ninety pounds of determined butter. Jack was a sailor, and ere Bill had chance to recover for another lunge the crafty folds of the rope fell over his neck, and skilfully and with despatch Jack bound the horned commodity, affixing him securely to the water-faucet in the far corner.

"Now," said Jack in a voice of relief, "I guess we can figure this thing out."

Whereupon he passed the envelope with its enclosure over to Dick, as being the better educated.

Dick spread out the paper that was inside and read:

> I hope you find the contents intact. They were in prime condition when shipped. Ain't these "exchange" columns wonderful?
>
> You see, I've sent my little boy, Tommy, off to boarding-school and haven't got any further use for the butter enclosed. May say, in passing, that I've tried every other way in this Creator's world to dispose of this superfluity.
>
> God be with you. Yours in relief,
>
> FARMER.
>
> P. S. On closer inspection, I notice that the pistol's mainspring is busted. But I'm returning good for evil; for you'll find Bill's mainspring O. K. At least, it was when shipped, and my responsibility ends there. F.

But little time had the friends for speculation upon this missive; for Bill at this moment finished eating all the tethering rope within his reach, which naturally freed him from bondage.

This second resultant pursuit over, in, and among the well-worn furniture of Jack's quarters was followed closely by a vigorous application of bony knuckles to the door from without.

To Jack's answering, the lady shoved a husky number nine shoe to guard against closing the portal again, and, thus assured, she faced the recaptured William.

"Well, land sakes, goodness alive, for all the—"

"You see, ma'am," broke in Dick mendaciously, "the animal's a trained performer at Dinkley's Museum."

"He is, eh?" was the rejoinder in such a quality of tone that even Bill's tail lost its attitude of stubby defiance. He was even seen, by Dick's off eye, to tremble.

And as for Jack, when he forthwith—in obedience to the landlady's bony and unwavering index-finger—led the trained performer down the ragged stair-carpet, Jack wondered, and, wondering, grew troubled at a thought.

It was at the front door that he finally summoned up courage enough to ask, calling up the intervening flights:

"But how about my chest, ma'am?"

"Your chest, indeed!" yelled down the lady in scorn. "Why, I won't be able to get the cost of the gas you've wasted for it. Your chest, indeed!"

On the sidewalk the three convened in council; for, somehow, Bill had become even truculent.

Jack was in despair.

"Oh, come now, Jack, boy," said Dick heartily, "thing's will turn out all right. I feel it. Anyway, you've got the goat. He's certainly worth *something* to *somebody*."

"Think so?" inquired Jack hopefully.

"Sure!" answered Dick emphatically. "You'll certainly be able to sell him for *something somewhere*."

"*I* will? Ain't you coming along *with* me?" cried Jack in dismay.

Now, it happened that by this time only nineteen urchins had turned into line. Dick hastened to explain.

"Nothing I'd like better, Jack, boy," said he, "but you see, an editor told me to show up by four o'clock. Said he might have a reporter job for me, you know. We must have more than one string to our bow, you understand."

"And have I got to ramble around all alone?"

"Why, you've got Bill. And here's what I'll do," continued Dick magnanimously, for he saw he would have to appease the gnawing appetite of the sailor if he ever hoped to retain his friendship. "I'll *guarantee*, even if you don't sell the goat before seven o'clock, I'll guarantee a dinner for us. Fact is, I'll pawn my fountain-pen, if necessary."

"But where'll I meet you?" whined Jack.

"Now, let me see," pondered Dick. "I've got it. You meet me in front of Chilwin's restaurant at seven sharp, understand? I'll be there with the coin, sure. Till then, so long."

"So long," repeated Jack sadly, as he cuffed an urchin who was scorching Bill's tail with a cigarette-butt.

## III.

WEARY and sick at heart, but a little cheered in spite of all by Dick's guarantee, Jack took up his job of finding a buyer for Bill.

First of all, of course, he decided that the sons of the wealthy might find a fancy for the creature. But Fifth Avenue, whither he trekked with this thought in mind, presented the appearance of a town walled against an attacking enemy; for, being midsummer, every door and window was boarded up tight.

Then he reckoned that some enterprising brewery might be up-to-date enough to buy the goat as an animated bock beer advertising sign. But those brewers he visited with the proposition gave one glance at Bill, and would have none of him.

Then came a really bright idea to Jack. He approached a sausage-maker's establishment.

"What?" cried the sausage man. "Break every cog in my machine? Not much."

And Jack passed on, his spirits at lowest ebb.

Even Bill suffered dejection, for all this while he allowed himself to be led along peaceably.

Finally Jack wearied of the chase. He even felt that Bill's absence, without any money, would go toward solace. He therefore tried to lose him.

But Bill had by now become almost affectionate; and, round corners as he would slip ever so swiftly, Jack always found Bill a close second.

One time, though, Jack had nearly shaken him off the trail, and was turning a block in an extra bewildering "double," when he met a cop leading Bill.

Bill recognized Jack at once.

"This your goat?" asked the cop delightedly.

"Naw," lied Jack.

But the cop was wise in his generation. He evidently knew goat signs. He recognized Bill's recognition.

"None o' your kiddin'," said he. "Take this here animal and keep him off'n the streets loose like, or I'll run yez in."

Once more Jack clutched the rope and led Bill on, just as the first notch slipped into the darkness of twilight.

This caused Jack to consult a corner jeweler's clock.

"Quarter to seven!" he cried to himself delightedly.

And thereupon he sat a strenuous pace toward Chilwin's restaurant, where he was to meet Dick for that "feed."

Bill seemed tired, but of a sudden his spirits quickened, as did Jack's; for there, directly ahead, glared a wonderful globe of incandescence, lighting up in cheerful invitation the entrance to a gas-

tronomic parlor from the swinging doors of which there were wafted, from time to time, such significant phrases as "Draw one!" "Two off the iron!" "Brown the wheat, nine!" "Right, seven!"

Before the expanse of glittering window Jack halted.

A vision smote him, and smote him where he was real vulnerable. For, in there, standing before a window-range and pouring unctuous batter from a pewter pitcher, was the prettiest girl Jack had seen since his three years whaling in the south seas. And as for those pancakes she was preparing!

She didn't see Jack, but his mind lost its somberness from that second, and his face lighted up into a grin; that is, until a thought struck him. And that thought was—Bill.

He certainly couldn't leave the goat out there on the sidewalk, and, of course—but here Dick appeared, wearing a happy smile.

"What! Couldn't you get your price for him, Jack, boy?"

Jack growled so ominously that Dick heeded the danger-sign.

"Well, *I've* had luck!" he cried. "That editor really meant business. Gave me the reporter job, and even advanced this here V on my week's salary."

He held out a five-dollar bill.

"Great!" cried Jack at sight of it.

Then his face clouded as he went on to explain the difficulty as to what to do with Bill while they ate.

Just at that moment, however, a heavy-set man with a do-it-or-die expression came along with a blanketed bulldog of monstrous size.

The man entered the restaurant, took a seat at a side-table, shoved the dog to a position underfoot, smiled at a pretty waitress, and gave his order.

The friends were not long in acting upon the inspiration.

Jack drew his pea-jacket from his shoulders, threw its careless and concealing folds over Bill's scrawny sides, and thus the trio entered.

## IV.

THAT emporium for the refreshment of the inner man presented a different appearance once the door was passed. Its dimensions suffered a shrinkage; for what had appeared from without to be a large and commodious apartment was then seen to have this enhancing effect produced by the sundry and varied placing of well-polished mirrors which extended from floor to ceiling.

Furthermore, the joints of the reflecting glasses were carefully concealed. The effect was startling at any time.

But as Dick and Jack furtively led the enshrouded Bill to a secluded table, this effect passed from the realm of the startling and became electrical.

That room *defied* furtive seclusion. There was no such thing anywhere in there. For no sooner did one mirror catch a glimpse of that goat than it immediately and forthwith cast and carried the glad impression to the next.

A third would and did catch up the reflection until there was a perfect riot of knotty horns, bleary, bloodshot eyes, and well-worn pea-jackets depicted; and this with Jack himself figuring somewhere in the background.

And it was right in the center of things—right where the combined *foci* of reflections met—that Bill, from the state of lethargy into which he had slumped, managed finally to flash real cognizance of things into those bleary, bloodshot orbs.

One not present at the time would not have believed so speedy an awakening possible. Even Jack, though he was very much present, was some second and a half in realizing. And that second and a half was fatal.

One buck-jump, straight up and into the air, Bill made to free himself of both pea-jacket and rope-leash; and, as it was thereupon seen that the twenty other goats had simultaneously and likewise cleared for action, things developed in the way of movement.

Ere the portly proprietor, from his position behind the glittering cash-register, could possibly reach the scene, the affair was almost over; for Bill's code of warfare was "strike and retire."

Eighteen of the full score of opponents had been effectually put in limbo before even a hint of any cessation of hostilities became manifest.

"The scene was one of terrific dis-

order," said the *Chronicle* next day, and that journal is famed for its conservatism.

But from among the scattered glassware, crashed mirrors, smashed crockery, overturned furniture, and terrorized patrons there suddenly flashed a vision into the midst of the fray.

It was no other than the lovely girl who had been "browning the wheats" in the window. Her action was determined. There was no hesitation about her.

She threw her dimpled arms around the very neck of Bill, the belligerent.

"Oh, Billy," said she, "I wish I hadn't never left the farm!"

But there was no time for Jack and Dick to figure out this mystery.

Jack realized that now was his chance, or never, for the atmosphere was growing rather hot.

Man of action as he really was in an emergency, he quickly slipped the strong leather belt from his waist and speedily leashed therewith the now quieted Bill.

Then both he and Dick beat a hasty and guarded retreat.

The sidewalk again reached, Jack managed to whisper a word of inquiry to Dick.

"Where away now, Dick?"

Dick's look of set concentration relaxed for a second.

"Why, Jack," said he, "don't you see the value of all this to me? Don't you realize that this is the finest thing in the way of a first 'scoop'? It'll just *make* me. I feel it. *I've* got to run right along over to the office and get this affair written up. So long and good luck."

Jack's disgust at this desertion can be realized; but, in passing, it may be well enough to state that that "story" really did make Dick in the newspaper world.

But Jack, at the moment, was in no mood to be forgiving.

Instead, it was then important for him to be speedy; speed above all things.

Three blocks he had covered at a good clip, Bill keeping up finely to the belt, when Jack thought it safe to look behind to see how close was the pursuit.

What he discovered was that selfsame heavy-set man with the bulldog. And the man was making good time, too.

Jack redoubled his efforts.

"Hi, there!" sang out the man.

Jack never looked around again. Instead, he turned a corner that promised more concealment. The concealment was there, but, after all, it was not such as Jack had counted upon. For, wo of woes, it proved to be a "blind" alley.

And here it was that the man overtook Jack and his friend Bill.

"Well," wheezed the man as he came up to Jack, who now thought all was over with him, "if that don't beat the Dutch! Here am I, whom most everybody is running after, myself chasing a fellow—and at that, to give him a chance."

"A chance at what?" grunted Jack. "Jail?"

"Jail, nothing," explained the man; "I'm Jeff Hanby, the theatrical manager of the N. and Q. circuit. Do you know, I've been hunting three weeks for a goat. You see, I'm staging a sketch called 'Haggerty's Row of Flats.' Need a goat in it, you understand. Couldn't find one in all Manhattan, or Harlem, either, nowadays, for that matter."

Here he indicated the bulldog.

"D'you know, I've had to tie a pair of horns on that there beast and make him play the part? Don't you yourself reckon I need that goat of yours? Come, now, what'll you take for him?"

Jack's surprise still held him a moment.

"Out with it!" cried the man. "What do you want?"

"What I want," said Jack dreamily, "is something to eat."

The man seemed delighted.

"I'll make it a dinner at Delmonico's," he cried.

Then reason once more took up abode in Jack. He began to see that, after all, he was holding a commodity that was "short."

He furthermore recalled how the morrow would come and find him in want of *another* dinner. He would not sell his birthright, as it were, for a mess of pottage.

"What I need most," said he guardedly, "is a job."

"What's your trade?" asked the manager. "What can you do best?"

"I'm a sailor, and I guess I can make knots about as well as anything."

"All right," cried the man delightedly. "I'll make you a loft man among the scene-shifters. That's all right?"

Jack allowed it was.

"And, furthermore," added the manager magnanimously, "I'm not going to go back on that Del blowout, either. Think a steak and mushrooms would go pretty good?"

And again Jack allowed they would.

# CHICAGO BY THURSDAY.*

By EDGAR FRANKLIN.

Author of "Washington—or Worse?" "The Price of Silence," "In Savage Splendor," etc.

**The thunderbolt suddenly dropped in the path of a business man on his last lap to a ten-thousand dollar goal.**

## SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

GEORGE CLIFFORD has just succeeded in arranging for his firm an important merger of manufacturing companies, and is to turn in the papers at his office in Chicago by noon of the following Thursday.

He is to receive some deeds from a man named Mecklen at Walden Gardens, near the town of Downsford, Ohio, and saying good-by at Downsford to his friend, John Austen, who starts at once for New York, he goes to his hotel. Finding that the clerk has given him a roommate, who is half-seas over, he leaves at once for Walden Gardens.

Upon his return in the early morning he is arrested for the murder of this same man, Brandon Smith, of Altoona. In his pockets are discovered the valuables of the murdered man, which he had been on the point of depositing for safe-keeping at the hotel office, and Clifford is held on suspicion. His lawyer, Harding, tells him that it will take some time to prove an alibi, as Mecklen has left for the West. He bids the young man give up all hope of reaching Chicago by Thursday.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE GRAY-COATED ANGEL.

ALL things considered, Clifford seemed to be a little worse off than he had been an hour back.

Genial, encouraging Harding had added half a dozen darker tones to the picture by his presence and his talk. Where awakening had brought only steel bars to confuse the prisoner, the lawyer seemed to have contributed advice and comment that made the steel bars look almost puerile.

Clifford's head dropped to his hands, as he sat gloomily on the edge of the hard cot.

After all, though, why should he have expected Harding to coddle him? Harding was a lawyer of hardened sensibilities—a man who did business in business hours, and was not accustomed to weep over his clients or smooth their hair and purr over them. To him this matter was as much a part of the day's work as the weighing of a pound of butter to the grocer on the corner.

And yet—well, in spite of his well-known crispness, in spite of his ability as an attorney, he might have advanced a word or two of encouragement.

Clifford's teeth bared in a grin that was almost wild, as he ran his fingers through his hair and stared across the cell.

*Was* Harding as good as his reputation would indicate, in criminal cases, at any rate? *Was* his self-assurance justified by past performances in criminal lines? Clifford gave it up, with a choking sigh. Certainly, he had no means of finding out just now. He knew Harding to be a man of big corporation business and a master of civil law.

But *was* he the man that Clifford needed? And if he didn't happen to be the right person, what the dickens was going to happen to Clifford?

* *Began January* ARGOSY. *Single copies, 10 cents.*

The problem of getting to Chicago by Thursday still stuck fast in his brain, but other matters began to well up now and somewhat overshadow the time-limit question.

Why, this case against him was pitch-black! The mere fact of his complete innocence didn't alter that at all. The evidence was dead against him, and if the grand jury elected to indict him for murder in the first degree—and there seemed hardly a doubt but that the indictment would come in short order—what an infernal array of damning facts the district attorney would have at his service.

Cold, pouring sweat began to ooze out on Clifford's forehead as imagination filled in the details.

A picture of a sweet-faced mother in New York, proud and confident of her only son's perfection, rose up before him as if picked out in flame. Another picture—and this of a younger woman, who awaited his letters daily, and knew to a certainty that her prospective husband was the solitary faultless man—followed the first.

What about *them* when he was dragged up for trial?

And he would be brought to trial! There wasn't a doubt about that, either. He'd be brought to trial, and—*suppose he were convicted of the murder?*

For that wasn't at all impossible, either, as matters looked now. There was, in fact, a very strong chance of such a catastrophe. And he'd be sentenced to death in the electric chair and shipped away to State's prison and confined—

Mr. Clifford poured out a drink of warm and unpalatable water in the heavy agate-ware cup and drank it down. Hands in pockets, then, he took to tramping up and down his narrow cell; until, for the fiftieth time, he came to the big, solid bars by the door.

He stopped. What sort of a jail was this? There seemed to be sounds of merriment below, and the sounds greatly resembled girlish voices. He listened intently for a little.

He might be entirely mistaken, but he gained a very strong impression that somewhere at the bottom of that cheerless, gray well of concrete blocks there was a rather formidable gathering of femininity!

Heavier voices floated up, too, and in a volume that was no less than amazing to an uninitiated suspect. Some dozens of people were talking down there, and in the high-pitched voices of animated curiosity.

Five or ten minutes and Clifford walked back to the armor-plate chair that belonged to his new abode. Another little wait and he heard the tramp of footsteps nearer at hand.

He wondered a bit, and gave over wondering. He had enough to think about with his own affairs; those of other humans could afford to wait. Whoever was walking around in the corridor below the third tier was luckier than himself, and he envied them.

And then steps seemed to be coming up in his direction, too!

A portly person in blue uniform strolled by, a jingling bunch of his keys in his hand. Behind him came half a dozen staring young girls, who turned their round eyes at Clifford and hurried on down the line after their conductor, whispering rapidly.

They wheeled at the end, and hurried back past the cell; and a bitter smile came to his lips. From wherever they might hail, the dear young things had seen the hideous murderer whose name had probably filled the morning papers of Downsford; and it would have given that gentleman supreme satisfaction to rush out of his cell and chase them, screaming, from the building!

However, the bars prevented, and the voices continued to float upward; and very shortly new steps ascended the stairs by which he had come to his prison house.

It was another keeper this time, and behind him strolled a tall, well-favored man in a long, gray raincoat of utterly inconspicuous pattern and design. A little smile flickered about his lips, and Clifford caught:

"Put the old chap pretty well up in the air, didn't you?"

"Top tier, sir," the keeper responded.

"Well, Cliff never was one to stay near the bottom of a situation," the light voice went on.

The prisoner started.

This tall person, whom he had certainly never seen before in his life, seemed to know him. Indeed, at the very moment he was saluting the man behind the bars with every evidence of familiarity, and—

Clifford caught himself quickly. In all probability, it was one of Harding's detectives. Very likely Clifford's part was to seem unastonished at the sight of him; for, as the keeper thrust a key in the lock, the stranger laughed again with:

"Didn't expect me, eh?"

The prisoner essayed a rather sorry smile by way of response. The barred door opened, and the odd visitor turned to the keeper.

"I say, come back and let me out of jail in about ten minutes, will you? I've got to make an almighty short call here."

The keeper nodded and departed.

The stranger sauntered along to the chair, placed his hat—a broad, light felt one—upon the stand, and stretched his legs comfortably. A suddenly keen glance down the corridor, after the vanishing keeper, and he said softly:

"Glad to meet you personally, Clifford, old man!"

"Well—"

"Who am I?" The stranger laughed softly. The laugh died away in a rich chuckle. "I, Clifford, am the original friend in need."

"What?"

"Surest thing you ever knew, boy. Is that son of a gun out of sight yet? He is. Good!" He dragged the chair closer to the cot. "I'll bet you don't know me?"

"You win," answered the prisoner, "unless your name happens to be Barton."

"Well, I don't know Barton, but my name doesn't happen to be anything even similar. It's Elthorpe."

"Elthorpe?"

"Precisely—a really euphonious and high-class name, if you say it over a few times." The stranger's laugh bubbled up again. "Clifford, I won't have much time to discuss matters. Therefore, we'll consider that I'm the spokesman of this gathering. What the dickens have you got yourself into here, anyway?"

"I haven't got myself into anything," replied the prisoner, rather hotly. "If you've read the papers this morning, you probably know more about the fool business than I do myself."

The remarkable Mr. Elthorpe's face grew serious. He extracted an ornate cigar-case from his pocket, offered a weed to Clifford, and finally lit one himself.

"I believe you, old man," he muttered, as he considered the spot of ash on the end of his tobacco. "You don't know me, but I know you. Funny we've never met in New York, as a matter of fact. I know all the stunts, or part of them, that you and Austen have been doing around here lately. To go a little further, I may say that I used to be in the same line myself, four or five years back."

"Er—yes?" Clifford's eyes were opening somewhat.

"And when I struck this town early in the morning, and heard about the excitement—well," his decidedly taking smile shot suddenly at Clifford, "I thought maybe I could lend a helping hand, you know."

"There's no use of saying how grateful I am," Clifford burst out, "but there isn't a thing you can do, Elthorpe."

"There isn't, hey?" The visitor's smile broadened suddenly, and his voice lowered. "That demonstrates just what I divined years ago, Clifford — that there's no room for a brilliant and imaginative man in your present, and my late, line of business. Clifford, I can do more things to help you in the next half hour than the whole supreme court of the country could do if you engaged them as lawyers."

"Eh?"

"Shut up!" pursued Elthorpe, as his voice sank even more. "We haven't any time to talk two-sided. I know what you're after—to get to Chicago in a hurry. All right. This philanthropic soul of mine warmed up to it—and it's a cinch! Clifford, this is visitors' day at this star jail."

"Yes?"

"And the—whatever it is—convention here has packed the little shack to suffocation. More than that, even. I discovered by a little investigation down-stairs that all the hardened criminals are going

to be let out for exercise inside of fifteen minutes. Do you get *that?*"

He grinned broadly. Clifford refrained from comment.

"Regular old melodrama plot," continued Mr. Elthorpe; "but, if you want to get free, it's going to work as sure as shooting, Clifford. I don't know where they turn the moral derelicts loose for a breath of air, but I've got a strong suspicion that it's down in the jail-yard, beside the sheriff's office; and just at present that jail-yard looks like a Sunday-school picnic or a Chautauqua young ladies' gathering."

He sent a puff of smoke toward the ceiling.

"When they let you out," he concluded, "beat it for the crowded part—always providing, of course, that they haven't cleared out the visitors. After that just trust to your uncle and keep a straight face. It's a shame to trick the gentle natives out this way, but everything goes in—"

Elthorpe broke off sharply. Familiar steps were coming nearer once more.

"Say! Keep your wits with you, and I'll get you clear of this joint," whispered the visitor hurriedly. And then his voice rose with a loud: "Well, goodby, old man, and don't worry. It's the devil, just now, but it'll all be quashed out of existence by this time to-morrow. We'll attend to that, and—"

"Visitors all have to go to the ground floor while the prisoners are out for exercise," the keeper interrupted him.

There was a shake of the hand, and if Clifford put a bit of enthusiastic strength into it, perhaps there was little wonder. Elthorpe sauntered out and, as the keeper waited with a perfunctory hand on the door of the cell, Clifford slipped on his overcoat and hat and inquired dryly:

"Am I going to be exercised now?"

"You don't have to go out if you don't want to, sir, but I'd take a breath of air if I were you."

The door opened, and Clifford walked out rather stiffly. A six-by-ten cell is hardly a place to limber the muscles. He descended the slate stairs after his rather lethargic guard, and in a matter of a minute he was walking into the wide prison-yard.

It was a queer gathering, all around. Across the big enclosure some dozen prisoners, apparently from the lower tiers, were shuffling somewhat aimlessly about under the eyes of a trio of keepers. In other quarters a horde of rather too gaily dressed men and women were staring at the scene with all the cheerfully impersonal interest of the uncarcerated bucolic jail visitor.

To his immediate right was a mass of perhaps fifty moving people; to his left, the keeper. And the keeper turned to him with a gruff command:

"Git over there with the rest of 'em, mister!"

Whereupon he disappeared!

Indeed, he disappeared like a dissolving picture in a magic-lantern—and Clifford caught his breath. Why, he was almost in the visiting crowd himself and, save for a little more metropolitan cut of clothes, there was nothing to distinguish him from them.

His brain quickened suddenly.

He edged to the right, and found himself between two girls. He edged farther, and half a dozen women were around him. He also took to staring with mild interest, and he found himself behind a formidable gentleman in farm-like clothes, and he felt a hand tapping his shoulder.

"This looks easier than making bad change in a one-ring circus," came a whisper. "Just slide into this slouch-hat and give me your derby, Clifford—quick!"

A single second and the change was made. Everybody else was staring at the prisoners across the yard. The soft hat dropped gently on Clifford's head, and the derby was snatched away.

With studied unconcern, he turned and perceived that Elthorpe, in the black hat, was adjusting his glasses and staring vacuously at the unhappy captives across the enclosure, and he heard:

"Oh, let's get out of this, Tommy! It's too blamed cheerless for mine!"

Clifford nodded a careless assent, and Elthorpe began to push his way slowly for the big gate that led into the office region of the jail.

It was a loitering, unconcerned progress. It was a little trip, nevertheless, which sent rather more thrills through Clifford's anatomy than he could remem-

ber in any previous similar space of time. The crowd parted unwillingly, and surged together behind them. It opened before them again, and they were at the gate. A surly looking individual in uniform rattled keys and dragged the big mass of bars open. They passed through, and the bars slammed again behind them.

And—having walked straight through the office into the street—even the other door of the jail snapped to.

And Clifford, in his slouch-hat and gray overcoat, was once more a free man!

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE ROAD TO ELSEWHERE.

THE corner being not more than a dozen paces distant, they steered toward it.

Elthorpe's arm went familiarly through that of his companion, and together they sauntered to the turn of the street.

Mr. Elthorpe was shaking with mirth, albeit his countenance was straight enough until they had reached the corner and were steering up the narrow, cheerless side-street.

Then he broke into another of his peculiarly rich little laughs and remarked:

"They might not be able to do it in the Tombs, but it goes slick and easy here, Clifford."

The late prisoner almost choked.

"I don't know how to thank you—" he began.

"It isn't necessary," chuckled Elthorpe. "It was like taking candy away from a child, anyway."

"But—"

"If you feel awfully bad about it, you can give me the fifty I presented to that pig-headed keeper to forget about you once he got you down-stairs, though," pursued Mr. Elthorpe.

"Did you—"

"I did," interrupted that energetic individual. "And if it isn't convenient now, Clifford, next week or next year will do just as well."

With a jerk, Clifford's not too tremendous roll of bills came forth, and he found a fifty and passed it to the other.

"If I could do something to repay you, Elthorpe—" he hazarded.

"You can't," laughed the other. "A man like me—a man equipped with such a superfluity of brains that he's able to remove prisoners from the custody of the authorities of such a community as this—could never need money, Clifford. And as for thanking me, you don't have to do it. It was more fun for me than for you."

The new chuckle sent his cigar smoke out in a quivering wreath.

"The right thing," continued Mr. Elthorpe, "would be to get a cab and dash like sin for some suburban station, I suppose, and then launch you on your way to Chi. However—"

Clifford nodded.

"However, it might look a little bit raw," continued Mr. Elthorpe. "Not to say that authorities with the intelligence of this bunch would ever think of having detectives at any of the stations hereabouts, but—"

He broke off with a grunt, and he added cheerily:

"Say, nerve seems to pay in this town. Let's find a restaurant and have some lunch. It's after one now, and you can't get a train before two at the earliest."

Daring?

So it seemed to Clifford. And yet any idea of this remarkable and unknown friend, who had turned up in the hour of need, and accomplished in fifteen minutes what Harding needed several weeks to bring about, was well worthy of consideration.

A slightly wild sense of the haphazard luck of the whole proceeding struck the late prisoner. He laughed himself, as he fell into step, and remarked:

"If we've gone this far, we may as well eat, Elthorpe."

A restaurant loomed up providentially.

It was not a startlingly fashionable establishment, but the faint odor of cooking was distinctly inviting. They strolled in, and found places at a table in the corner.

Quick service and plates thrown almost directly at their heads expedited matters. Inside of fifteen minutes the pair of adventurers were on the street once more—satisfied, if started on the road to indigestion.

Mr. Elthorpe lighted another cigar, and grinned up at the sun.

"And now to get rid of you," he observed.

"I'll be thoroughly glad to be got rid of," laughed Clifford rather excitedly.

"Have you everything you need in the way of your papers?"

"They're all on me."

"Sure? Nothing left behind in your grip at the hotel?" Elthorpe pursued solicitously. "I'm pretty wise to what you're engineering, you know, and we don't want to get you started without the goods."

For answer Clifford thrust a hand into either pocket of his coat.

Two bundles of papers came forth—nice, thin papers that had little bulk in themselves, but that meant ten thousand a year to him! He held them in sight for an instant.

Elthorpe nodded.

"Which only shows the advantage of being held for a material witness instead of being arrested straight out as a murderer," he observed. "They couldn't take your own property away, but if they got you now—phew!"

He became thoughtful again.

"Stuff those things out of sight, Clifford!" he commanded, rather nervously. "I'm beginning to think we're taking too many risks here, anyway. It's possible to have too much daredeviltry. Let's get down to the station."

Slowly, with outward unconcern, they headed toward the distant depot and, as the clock struck the half hour, they were at the door.

Elthorpe stopped his companion.

"You can slide into the darkest corner," he suggested. "I'll find out about the train, and get things fixed."

They entered the waiting-room and glanced around.

"There's a good spot, over there by the cigar-stand," went on Clifford's deliverer in an undertone. "You go and camp over there, and I'll do the rest."

Luck seemed to have followed Mr. Elthorpe. Clifford obeyed without question, and hurried across to the region indicated, while Elthorpe made toward the ticket windows.

There was a considerable pause, during which Clifford endeavored to concentrate his attention upon the paper he had bought, and to avoid looking in Elthorpe's direction.

The latter returned presently, and with something of a rush. His eyes were sparkling with a humorous excitement and, concealed in one hand, he held a ticket envelope.

"Clifford!"

"Yes."

"Come over here—yes, better still, come into one of the telephone booths and pick up the directory."

The man who was not in jail obeyed instinctively. In the booth he raised the open telephone book thoughtfully, with:

"Well?"

"The Lord's looking after you!" said Elthorpe rapidly. "I thought the train went at two—it goes at one-forty-five, old man. Here's your ticket. Oh, go on looking for numbers in the book. I'll jam it into your pocket."

There was a rather excited fumbling at Clifford's pocket, and Elthorpe laughed again as his hands fell to his sides. Indeed, they went into his own pockets, and he backed slowly out of the booth.

"Say! I put my card in your pocket, with the tickets," he explained softly. "You can send back that overcoat when you get to Chicago, old man. Meanwhile—there! They're announcing your train! Come on!"

He gripped Clifford's arm, and they left the booth, and Mr. Elthorpe's tongue began to ripple. He talked of theaters and mythical society affairs and the scenery on the road to Chicago, as they passed to the train gates. He ended with a whispered:

"Get out your ticket!"

Clifford produced it automatically, and showed it to the man at the gate.

The official punched it, and he found that Elthorpe was wringing his hand affectionately with:

"Now, drop me a postal as soon as you get there, old man, and—"

A shove sent the trust-builder through the gate. Instinctively again he hurried down between the lines of cars, his Pullman ticket in hand.

It was accepted by the porter, and he was hardly more than seated when the

train was speeding away from the town. The station dropped behind swiftly. The suburbs of Downsford—manufacturing suburbs along the line of the road—slipped rapidly by, and in a very few minutes they were in the open country and spinning along at a rate that fairly thrilled Clifford's heart with joy.

He was loose! He'd walked out of jail, and was on his way to success again.

To be sure, in a matter of a day or two he was certainly due for recapture. But once he'd reached Chicago and delivered his papers, and closed up matters generally, he had every intention of returning to Downsford and surrendering himself voluntarily, and after that Harding could do his dilatory best.

Now, though, they were free to look for him and send his description all over creation if they liked, and he had a notion they were going to experience a little difficulty in finding him.

So far as he could see, he must simply have dropped out of the ken of the authorities. The open streets of Downsford were crowded now. His coat had been altogether different from his own; his hat, too, had been of another pattern.

He had not bought a ticket. No one at the depot had cast a suspicious eye at him even. Now he was speeding away as fast as steam and wheels could carry him!

And Elthorpe — big, good-natured, jolly Elthorpe—had done it all.

What an infinite blessing that tall person had become! Clifford leaned back in his chair and beamed upon the sunny landscape with half-opened eyes. He wished he might erect a monument to Elthorpe in Central Park. He wanted to decorate him with gold medals and give him a life pension.

Elthorpe, in fact, at the moment fulfilled Clifford's ideal of a good man and a good sport. He was one of the greatest things that had ever happened on earth!

And then, at the end of a long dream, Mr. Clifford perceived that the stately conductor was coming through the train for tickets. He glanced at his watch.

Quarter to three! At this rate they must be at least sixty miles nearer Chicago already. He brought the envelope from his overcoat pocket and held it ready, smiling contentedly in his fancied security.

And presently the imperious collector of tickets arrived at his side and held forth his hand.

He punched the ticket and handed it back, and Clifford, rather more from force of habit than from curiosity, inquired lazily:

"Going to hit Chicago on time at this rate, eh, conductor?"

"What's that, sir?" the official asked, in apparent astonishment.

"I say, we're going to make Chicago on time?"

"Well, not on this train." The conductor stared hard at him now. "This train—like your ticket, sir—is the quickest thing heading to New York."

*"What!"*

"Yes, sir. This is the fastest New York train during the day."

If Clifford had been sleepy a moment ago, he was certainly wide-awake now. He sat up in his seat and gazed at the conductor with an expression that suggested insanity.

"Look here!" he cried. "Have you gone crazy or have I?"

"I haven't," the official replied, a little tartly. "There's your ticket."

Clifford stared hard at it.

"Downsford, Ohio, to New York City, New York, Grand Central Station," read the remarkable bit of printed matter.

Downsford to *New York!*

Clifford pulled himself together quickly and faced the conductor with:

"Say! There's been some fool mistake, and that may be it, but—is this train *really* bound for New York?"

"It is."

"Well, then—well, when and where can I get off and get aboard a train for Chicago?" Clifford demanded desperately.

The conductor considered carefully.

"We don't make a stop for three hours and forty minutes now," he said meditatively. "You might get off there and catch a west-bound train about half-past nine."

"I've got to have a train before that."

"I don't know where you're going to get it, sir, unless—"

He broke off again and scratched his

bearded chin. Clifford waited, on edge, for minute after minute, and in the end the conductor perched upon the next chair, which happened to be empty.

"Is it very urgent for you to reach Chicago?" he inquired.

"It most certainly is."

"Um-um!" There was renewed pensive consideration of the Pullman carpet. "Willing to risk your neck for it, sir?"

"Cheerfully!"

"Are, eh?" The conductor stared at him with a rather grim smile. "Well, in a matter of five minutes now"—he consulted his watch—"yes, in about four minutes, we'll slow down a good deal to go into a siding and let the west-bound express go by. It's just this side of Hempfield."

"And—"

"Well, it's a question just where we pass, sir. Sometimes we never come to a stop in the siding—it's a long one—and the Chicago train goes by at full speed. Sometimes we wait three or four minutes for the other train to come; and if that's the case you could probably hold her up, for she comes slow to the other end of the shunt. If you want to take a chance, you could drop off the train and risk it. But you must understand that the company isn't taking the slightest responsibility in case of accidents."

Clifford leaned forward tensely.

"But can I get the Chicago train?"

"It's just about even money," the conductor responded thoughtfully. "You may make it, and you may not. Do you want to try?"

Clifford gathered his coat from the hook and planted his hat firmly on his head.

"I do," he said.

"All right. I'll open the door and hook up the platform for you, and if we slow down enough I'll give you the word to jump. Go careful, and you won't be killed, at least."

The conductor rose and walked to the door, and Clifford followed him with a little shudder. If the train decided to keep its present rate in the siding he might better shoot himself and get the ceremony over in easier fashion.

But the train was slowing down markedly now. Indeed, as it veered a little to the right, the speed became hardly more than that of a trolley car, and Clifford's heart beat fast.

The conductor, with corners of his mouth downturned, opened the door of the car and looked out. He retreated, took up the hinged section of the platform and remarked:

"I guess you're all right, sir, the way we're going now. Just get down there and hang on."

Clifford obeyed hastily. The speed was growing less and less each second, and the train had reached almost a crawl. Then, from behind him, came:

"Go ahead!"

He jumped straight out for the green field beside the track. He landed—somehow! He seemed to land on head and heels and hands, all at once. He rolled over several times, and then picked himself up and shook off some of the adhering turf.

And as he did so a whizzing streak of brown-painted and green-painted cars shot westward along the tracks, narrow day-coach windows and wider Pullman windows blending into one long, shining series of glitterings! The westward express had gone by at full speed.

Clifford stared stupidly after it. He turned then and stared in the direction his own train had taken. It was represented now merely by the square end of a car and a streak of smoke.

He managed to take a long breath. He tried to regain his senses, and he succeeded to a certain extent. He felt about his person with a somewhat dazed curiosity. Certainly, he was alive, and none of his essential parts seemed to be missing.

He ran a hand into his trousers-pocket. His money was there, and his keys and his watch were also in place.

But the most important of all were his papers, of course, and Clifford went rapidly to his coat-pockets.

And a shriek escaped him.

*Those* pockets were absolutely empty!

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE ANGEL REAPPEARS.

FOR Clifford there was a period of something that very nearly approached paralysis.

His hands jammed uncomfortably into his inner pockets, he stared down the sunny track after the rapidly vanishing east-bound express—and he gulped senselessly.

That little dark spot, with its decorative festoon of smoke, seemed to have a wonderful attraction for his whirling mind.

*That* was the train he had just left. That was the particular vehicle that must be carrying his papers eastward. And those papers—those papers that would have to be in Chicago by Thursday.

Mr. Clifford frowned suddenly.

Those papers could hardly be in the Pullman car, for his under-coat had not been unbuttoned since he left the jail. It was a little bit curious, but he remembered distinctly now that it was a fact. He had buttoned that coat on leaving his cell, and at that time the papers were there in their place.

And he had not unbuttoned it until he picked himself up from the dry ground. Therefore, it was hardly probable that the documents could have leaped voluntarily out of the somewhat tight garment; and if they hadn't leaped—

Clifford straightened up and braced himself.

It was all confounded nonsense, of course. The two bundles of documents must have shot out of his pockets when he leaped from the Pullman, and finding them would be rather easy here, for the soil where he had landed was free of weeds and grass.

He ran toward the huddled heap that had been Elthorpe's trim gray coat, and turned it over and shook it out.

But, of course, the papers were not in there. He hadn't changed a thing from the pockets. He remembered that quite clearly. He had left his papers precisely where they had been, and now—well, now they were somewhere on the landscape, and the thing was to find them.

He stared about.

A peculiarly sickening sense of amazement came over him, too. By no mortal chance could any ordinary quantity of papers have shot out of sight on this dreary stretch of country.

The land was bare of foliage—indeed, the fence was a good sixty feet from where he now stood.. There was no room for so much as a glove to hide.

And yet his papers were gone!

Swiftly he tramped back, in the hope that he might find the spot of his landing. The hope was fully and completely realized, for upon the soil there were two rather deep indentations where his feet had struck. Also there was clearly outlined the spot where he had rolled over and over.

As clues to the locality of his arrival on this particular part of Ohio, there was nothing whatever left to be desired.

And the papers, unless they had secreted a charge of gunpowder or a balloon about themselves, had not arrived with him.

Clifford walked to the fence, and sat down with something of a crash.

Was it possible that, after the run of luck that seemed to have followed Elthorpe's appearance, his mission was to be killed off at one swoop by the loss of his papers? He rubbed his forehead and stared across the landscape, bathed in warm afternoon sunshine.

Why the things couldn't be *gone!* They meant too much altogether, and he'd been too careful of them. There was something radically wrong somewhere or other.

He went through his pockets again, and he ended the search with a hollow groan.

Fifteen minutes, and the shock of dropping off a moving express-train began to wear away, and some degree of real sanity returned.

Somewhere between Downsford jail and—whatever this place might happen to be—Clifford had unquestionably lost those vital papers.

His solitary course now was to pursue his way to Hempfield and telephone the Pullman company, to learn whether or not they were in the car. Failing success in that quest, he could steer straight back for the prison and continue his search.

There was something about the irony of the idea that brought a grim laugh from him. Having escaped once, he would now have the pleasure of returning of his own accord—to find his papers and to face an indictment for murder in the first degree!

He got up and surveyed the eastern

horizon with a grunt of disgusted resignation.

Some seven church steeples were silhouetted there. That meant Hempfield was a town of size, and Clifford picked up the crumpled overcoat and shuffled toward the ties. He'd have to do a little bit of theatrical work now, and tramp his way to Hempfield and the telephone.

With forced bravery he started off.

Not altogether accustomed to pacing railroads, there was a lurking suspicion that somewhere behind a noiseless train was coming to macerate him. He tucked the overcoat under his arm, and—with a glance behind at every other step—made toward Hempfield and its steeples.

The afternoon was growing decidedly hotter, he reflected, as he dashed away beads of perspiration. Summer seemed to have dropped out of her proper position.

Also, Hempfield was taking to herself, apparently, some of the characteristics of an ocean mirage. Each stride up the grade—each dozen strides, in fact—seemed to leave the steeples at precisely the same distance, glistening through beads of perspiration.

Clifford shut his teeth and, with a last glance behind, all but broke into a run.

And then came the top of the ridge, and a sight of the station itself.

Rather curiously, it struck him, the very train he had left seemed to be just starting from the little depot beside the tracks. He stared at it, and mopped his forehead again and went on.

For some unfathomable reason the tramp of the down-grade seemed to bring his thoughts back to his papers and his troubles again, to the exclusion of the mythical train behind.

What could have happened?

How could Elthorpe have made the mistake about the ticket?

What evil impulse had prevented his looking at his ticket before the conductor came around?

But, more than all, *where were the papers?* Had they left him of their own accord? Had his pocket been picked? Had—

His foot struck something rather suddenly. He looked up with a start, and perceived that it was the edge of Hempfield's railway station platform.

He shook himself together and stepped rapidly along it, and into the cool shadows of the waiting-room. He'd find out where the nearest telephone was located and where he could get a message to that Pullman car, and just how long it would take to get his papers back, if they happened to be aboard, and—

"Well, what the dickens are you doing here?" asked an astonished voice.

Clifford looked up with a startled jerk.

There was something remarkably familiar about that voice; there was something considerably more familiar about the face from which it had come—for beside him stood Elthorpe!

Clifford's jaw dropped. Elthorpe poked him gently in the ribs and remarked:

"Say, don't look as if you were a jay that's just been fleeced at the shell-game, Clifford. That yokel behind the ticket window is staring at you."

"But—"

"Come out here on the back porch of our palatial station and tell me the worst," grinned Mr. Elthorpe. "There's a holy calm out in that direction, and we can commune with Nature and each other."

Somewhat dazedly, Clifford followed.

The back platform was indeed calm. Some long cases at the far end, branded "Track Repair Department," occupied a cool and breezy corner, and thither Mr. Elthorpe led the way and sat down.

"So you got off, anyway?" he queried, almost humorously.

"I certainly did."

"Where?"

"At a siding, almost eight miles west of here, I think, and—"

"Well, it's only about half a mile, but—never mind, on a warm afternoon like this, Clifford."

Elthorpe considered his cigar and chuckled.

"I knew you'd do it, Clifford," he remarked quietly.

"Do what?"

"Get off at the first slow-down."

"And did you know that you'd started me toward New York?" the trust-builder inquired rather warmly.

"Surest thing you ever knew, son!"

Mr. Elthorpe grinned cheerily at him, and ended by breaking into a laugh.

Somehow the humor of the situation failed to appeal to Clifford.

Red color surged into his hot cheeks, and his lips worked. Indeed, some rather hot words were ready to leave the latter, when Elthorpe laid a soothing hand upon his shoulder and muttered:

"Now, just dry up before you begin to shout, Clifford. I did the best thing in the world for you."

"Well, I fail to see—"

"Of course you do, because you've got your brain set on one point, and you can't shift it."

Elthorpe sobered, and glanced up and down the platform. They were entirely alone, and he continued in a low voice: "Now, as man to man, Clifford, do you suppose any amount of persuasion would have started you in any other direction than Chicago?"

"Certainly not, but—"

"That's the point exactly. How many people were there in Downsford who knew that you were headed straight for Chicago?"

"Well—" Clifford frowned. "Two or three dozen at the least, I suppose, Elthorpe."

"Precisely. And as soon as your departure is discovered in Downsford, they'll begin to look over the Chicago trains to find you. Is that one-idea mind of yours beginning to grasp the general scheme of this adventure?"

"No, it's not. I—"

Some of Mr. Elthorpe's friendliness seemed to vanish before the sharp tone. He laid a firmer hand on Clifford's arm, however, and went on:

"You confounded fool! Don't you see I'm trying to help you, and that I'm getting the usual reward? I'm endeavoring to get people off your track, in the region of Downsford; and I had several plans for steering you to Chicago in an entirely unostentatious manner. As a matter of fact, I traveled on that train with you, on the theory that you'd drop off here at Hempfield when you discovered there'd been an inexplicable mistake about the ticket. And here you are, with your papers and all, and not a soul with an idea *where* you are, and—"

"But I haven't got the papers!" Clifford all but shrieked.

*"What?"*

"No. I've lost them somewhere. I've lost them, either in the Pullman or when I dropped off at that wretched siding. They're *gone,* Elthorpe. They were done up in two bundles, and I haven't a trace of either bundle about me now."

Mr. Elthorpe leaned his broad back against the station and surveyed Clifford with an eye that was rather more than sarcastic.

"Well, you are a choice little specimen," he remarked tartly. "What the deuce did you do with them?"

"If I knew that do you suppose I'd be sitting here?" Clifford demanded wildly. "I'll have to see the station-agent and—"

He bounded to his feet, and shot into the depot.

The station-agent regarded him with entire calm. Most station-agents do regard one that way.

He'd lost some papers, and he fancied that he'd lost them on such and such a car, on such and such a train? Very well. The station-agent, by wire, could get the train at such and such a place, and have the papers sent back by the next train, if they happened to be aboard that train.

Would that do? Clifford announced that it would have to do; and he winced a trifle at the news that the earliest possible arrival of the papers, even on the off chance that they were found, would be after nine that evening.

There was no help for it. He walked slowly out to Elthorpe again, and stood beside him as the other asked in a tart manner:

"Well?"

"If I have good luck they may find them, and they may get them back by nine this evening."

"By which time, naturally, you'll have been arrested," observed Mr. Elthorpe. "Oh—rot!"

He stared at the platform for a minute or two. Then he looked up with:

"Let's eat, Clifford. The United States Hotel is the only place in this hamlet that owns private dining-rooms. We'll steer for there and have a refreshing bite."

He, too, arose and started away, and Clifford followed obediently.

All things considered, he seemed to have made an extremely bungling job of the last hour or two.

## CHAPTER IX.

### ANGELS AND DEEDS.

In addition to five real waiters the United States Hotel at Hempfield owned two genuine private dining-rooms, and into one of these—the hour being long after lunch-time—Clifford and Elthorpe were escorted.

It was a nice, quiet little apartment, with a hint of the converted bedroom about it. It had a round table in the baywindow, and the somewhat astonished waiter who had been assigned to the case flurried around the board, while the two visitors decided finally upon a cut of roast, a salad, and a cup of coffee.

The waiter disappeared then, and Elthorpe's eternal grin came into evidence once more.

"Clifford," he said, "are you sure those papers are gone?"

"Am I sure?"

The trust-builder all but gaped. Elthorpe's grin broadened.

He walked across to the door. He turned the key, removed and pocketed it. He returned to the table, with the grin hardened into a sort of bronze edition of a smile.

The expression puzzled Clifford more than a little. He stared at the other for a full minute, and at last he ventured:

"Elthorpe, what the dickens brings that satanic expression?"

Elthorpe seemed unaware of the remark.

"Clifford," he said thoughtfully, "it'd be nice if those papers were to turn up on the table here, wouldn't it?"

"Emphatically—yes."

"Well, then, suppose I do a little magic." The gray-coated angel made a pass toward his pocket.

There was a dull flop upon the table, and Clifford was permitted to stare at the two packages of documents which had lately reposed in his own clothes.

"Presto!" remarked Mr. Elthorpe happily.

"Elthorpe!" cried Clifford, as his hands went forward to grasp the mass of folded paper, "how the dickens did you—you ever get them—how the deuce can I ever thank you, and—"

"Well, don't be in such a thunderation hurry about thanking me," remarked the mysterious Mr. Elthorpe, as he drew the packages closer to him and chuckled almost inaudibly.

"But—"

"See here, sonny, where do you suppose I got these, anyway?" Elthorpe leaned forward curiously.

"That is what I was going to ask you."

"Shall I tell you?"

Mr. Clifford merely stared.

"Well, you particularly sweet and easy mark, I removed them from your pocket when I stuck in the ticket I bought for you." He sat back a little and beamed upon Clifford. "And it wasn't such a dreadfully crude and raw piece of work either, was it, Clifford?"

Clifford struggled for speech. Mr. Elthorpe drew the documents a little closer still.

"Wasn't bad, was it? It was a good deal like stealing a stick of peppermint; but I couldn't help it, son. You see, *I* happened to need them, as well as you!"

"*You!*" His senses began to return to Clifford.

"*Me!*" said Mr. Elthorpe, with scant regard for grammar, but with considerable force. "You see, I—"

There was a knock upon the door.

Elthorpe rose in leisurely fashion and walked over to the lock. A twist of the key and the waiter entered with a tray. Clifford sat back in some bewilderment and waited as the roast was served.

The salad and the coffee having been placed on the side-table, Elthorpe turned to the waiter with:

"Leave those there and come back in an hour or so. We'll serve them ourselves."

The waiter bowed and departed.

Mr. Elthorpe played with his knife and gazed at Clifford.

"I've got *you* pretty near dead to rights, haven't I?" he inquired blithely.

"If you'll tell me what on earth prompted you to pick my pockets, and turn me east when I wanted to go west, I may be able to tell you," responded the victim somewhat huskily. "Just now

I'm hanged if I know what you're talking about."

Elthorpe served the potatoes daintily.

"Item one," he remarked.

There was a considerable wait.

"Well, what's item one?" Clifford inquired.

"Item one is: Do you suppose an entire stranger is going to risk his freedom by releasing a man from jail—just for spasmodic affection?"

"Well—"

"Item two: When you spot a crime—releasing a man from jail is a crime, you know—you must look for the motive."

Mr. Elthorpe secured a piece of his roast and smiled over it.

"What's the motive, Clifford?"

"I—give it up," said Clifford rather faintly.

"I thought you would. I'll explain, in a few, well-chosen words, sonny. The motive is this: I've got all your bunch of deeds and bills of sales and everything else, haven't I?"

"Apparently."

"I've also got all the assignments in blank—that is, from you to—blank?"

"I presume so."

"Good. Then I'll pass those assignments over to you, filled out in my own sweet, euphonious name, and you can sign them off to me, one after another, eh?"

A piece of meat and a gasp collided in Clifford's throat.

When he managed to regain his breath, and when some of the sudden purple had left his countenance, he leaned across the table and fairly roared:

"Elthorpe, are you crazy, or do you think I am? What in the name of common sense are you talking about, anyway?"

Mr. Elthorpe smiled grimly.

"Everything I talk about is in the name of common sense, Clifford," replied he evenly. "You are going to put your neat signature to those documents, filled out in my name, or you're going back to Downsford and prepare for a heart-to-heart acquaintance with the electric chair or the hangman's noose." He faced Clifford steadily, and his countenance hardened more. "You know, *I'm* not joking."

"But—"

Elthorpe laid aside his eating utensils, and planted his heavy elbows on the table. Evidently the idea of a light and jocose treatment of the case was leaving him, for his jaw set squarely, and his affected interest in the food disappeared.

"Youngster," he said, "for the last few weeks I've been thinking that you were a fairly bright proposition. Now I'm beginning to change my mind considerably."

"Yes?" Clifford's brain whirled on—perhaps hopelessly—toward a solution.

"I've got you good. You know it as well as I do," Elthorpe went on sharply. "I've got you precisely where I want you, and I'm inclined to think you're not the business man I imagined. Because if you were"—he fumbled for a cigar—"you'd be so busy putting your name to those assignments that you'd have had to shove all the dishes off the table."

"Really?"

Clifford faced him rather calmly now, for his own wits were returning to their normal state. He'd have to spar for a little time, and he'd have to draw out such facts as he could. He smiled, therefore, with:

"And apart from the absolute insanity of the notion of my handing those assignments to you, what would you do with them if you had them?"

Mr. Elthorpe smiled acidly.

"We're alone. We may as well be candid. There's a little movement in opposition to that of your people, Clifford. That anemic little opposition happens to have secured one large, lovely bunch of coin, sonny. Therefore, knowing a good thing when they see it, and knowing that you were the king-pin on the buying movement, they hired *me* to watch *you* and checkmate you wherever and whenever I could, expense being counted out."

"So you're the agent—"

"Calmly, son—calmly," advised Elthorpe. "There's no need of swelling up and bursting apart in this nice, tidy room. I am indeed the agent of the opposition; and I don't say that it wasn't a piece of Dutch, blind luck for me that you elected to kill an inoffensive man in Downsford, and that you're easy in the way of having your pockets picked and

all that. But what I do say is, that I've got you now, and unless you sign off those papers I'll ring for whatever supply of police they own here and have you quietly toted back to Downsford."

He lighted the cigar.

"Is it tactful for you to sign or not?" he added.

Somehow the situation seemed painfully clear. Clifford moistened his lips, and sought for words as he pondered.

And the rebellion seemed to get the better of reason. He *hadn't* killed any one. He *hadn't* sinned in any respect. He'd been made—or perhaps had made himself—the victim of circumstances, and that wasn't any good reason why he should not only suffer, but throw over his own firm as well.

And, what was more, he wouldn't do it!

He wouldn't be so eternal an idiot as to sign away all that had been entrusted to him, although he felt rather certain that the signing could be in no sense legal. He wouldn't be threatened and coerced and—

"Elthorpe," he said quietly, "you can do what you please. We can get duplicates of all those documents!"

"*What?*"

"That's the beginning and the end of it, so far as concerns me."

Clifford sat back and folded his arms. Elthorpe, after a gulp, leaned forward and glared at him steadily.

Thirty seconds passed—and a minute—and then, when the second minute was well under way, Elthorpe's expression changed.

He began to smile a little. The smile broadened rapidly, until at last Elthorpe's genial laugh rang out, and he said softly:

"I guess first impressions are best after all, Clifford."

"What?"

"You'll do for a business man!"

"Well, if you have a notion that I'm going to allow you or any other man to make me an outcast from the business world and a swindler and—Heaven alone knows how much more—in addition to being suspected of a murder I didn't commit, you're dead wrong," said Clifford coolly.

"Good boy. I admire it." Elthorpe sat back and tucked the cigar between his teeth. "That means, naturally, that we've got to get down to a cash basis. How much are you going to take for the bunch, old man?"

"I'm not going to take anything for them," the trust-builder cried hotly. "And unless you hand that entire bundle of papers over here I'm going to let off a few yells and get in the police on my own account and—regain the papers without any struggle with *you!*"

"Honest?" grinned Elthorpe.

"Wholly so. And you can have me arrested fifteen or twenty times over if you like, and if—"

"All right. Five thousand, spot cash, Clifford," said Elthorpe tersely.

A huge roll of bills appeared, and was held up before him. Mr. Clifford's eyes rested on it for an instant, and a hard little sneer curled his lips.

He rose from his chair with:

"I guess there's nothing doing, Elthorpe."

Elthorpe straightened in his seat.

"Guess again, Clifford. I'll make it ten thousand dollars!"

Clifford turned toward the door. And he was brought back rather abruptly by a shrill cry of:

"Stop!"

Elthorpe was half out of his chair, and regarding him with eyes that burned.

"Clifford, if you'll sit down there—we'll send for a notary—and make over those assignments to me, I'll pay you fifteen thousand dollars, real money, in advance. Yes, I've got it here—look!"

He slapped the roll of money to the table. The letter "M," as engraved upon bank-notes, seemed to be spread all over the place as the roll opened.

"You'll never have another chance to make the same amount so easily, Clifford," Elthorpe's excited voice hurried on. "I'll take all the risks, of contests, and all that sort of thing. I'll get you a job at seven or eight thousand with our own concern, just as sure as God made little apples. I'll engineer the entire business, but you sit down there and let me send for a notary. I know one here. You let me—"

"I'll let you go to blazes," said Clifford coldly. "You've hit the wrong individual, Elthorpe, and you're going

to discover the fact inside of two or three minutes."

He turned again toward the door, and he turned back as quickly once more, for Elthorpe's low voice was quivering in a new key as he cried:

"Now, confound you! *You come back here and sign, and you won't get a red cent for it!*"

The black muzzle of a Colt's "forty-five" was leveled at the trust-builder!

He faced it for perhaps a tenth of one second. Then, as he stood by the table, he dropped as suddenly and silently as if the thing had actually drilled a hole through him.

Straight to the floor, straight under the table, he went with hardly a sound. His feet struck those of the astonished Elthorpe, and all but sent that person out of his chair.

With the revolver still raised over it, the table shot into the air as Clifford rose. There was a crash of dishes, as cloth and all slid to the floor. There was another crash, as Clifford fell bodily upon the other occupant of the little locked dining-room.

They were down, and Clifford was clutching the hand that held the pistol!

It was a hand that struggled violently, too. It seemed bent upon directing itself toward Clifford's anatomy, and Clifford thrust forth every bit of strength in his body to foil the scheme.

There was another wrench by the prostrate Elthorpe; there was another frenzied defense by Clifford.

And then, somehow, the hand that held the pistol was dragged down suddenly and turned toward Elthorpe again. For ten seconds muscles strained against muscles, hot face crashed into hot face, wild eye met wild eye—and the roar of a heavy cartridge crashed upon the stillness of the little room!

*(To be continued.)*

# HARDY'S POOR AIM.

By FRED V. GREENE, Jr.

**A tale of anger quickly cooled, and of a skate over thin ice to bring succor which could not be found.**

HARDY watched the figure of a man slowly making his way up the snow-and-ice-covered road. There was a sneer on the old man's face as he saw the newcomer slipping and sliding along the highway, and when he stopped before the entrance to the Hardy place a grim determination spread over the owner's countenance.

"Mr. Hardy! Oh, Mr. Hardy!" the stranger called as he saw his man seated at the window.

The one thus summoned sprang to his feet and hurried to the door, which he flung open angrily.

"Don't you dare step a foot on my land!" he shouted.

"Now, be reasonable, Mr. Hardy," the other pleaded. "At least, let us—"

"You know what I said," the old man broke in. "I said the last time you were here that if you ever came on my land again I'd shoot you. And I mean it. Get off this instant!"

The other had advanced a few steps, but now paused; then he came a little nearer. "I want to overcome your feelings against me, Mr. Hardy," he said, "so we can talk over this matter without bitterness."

The old man pulled out a large old-fashioned revolver and pointed it at the trespasser.

"Another step and I'll shoot," he cautioned.

"Oh, pshaw! You're not so—"

But the sentence was never finished. There was a flash and a heavy report. For an instant even Hardy himself seemed slightly stunned; then, as the smoke cleared away a bit, and he made out the form of a man lying face down upon the snow, a sense of terror came over him. He stood rooted to the spot,

while the revolver slipped from his hand and rattled noisily upon the porch.

II.

SOME ten years before Hardy's farm had been the only habitation upon that side of Lake Netcong. Then some capitalists came and, realizing the beauty of the spot and its many advantages, bought land on the opposite shore and erected a few summer homes. This was the start, and the summer previous to the time in which this story is laid saw the entire shore-front built up with homes used during the heated spell.

It had been a fortunate turn for John Hardy. Little by little he had sold his land at good prices, until now he only had the plot upon which his home stood, upon each side of which were pretentious summer homes.

Then came the project of a trolley line to circle the lake, and thereby afford quick transit to the railroad station for the cottagers. As all the houses faced the lake, and the road wound its way in back of them some two hundred feet, the plan immediately caught popular favor, and was quickly under way.

In fact, the entire route was laid and permits granted, with one exception. That exception was John Hardy.

At the rear of his house the public highway turned abruptly and ran at right angles with the lake for over a mile. Hardy had constructed, at his own expense, a private road which continued close to the lake, and which met the other at a point about a mile farther on. The use of this he had granted to the people to whom he had sold the property it touched. But as he had never turned it over to the county, it still remained his personal possession, and as he had spent quite a sum of money to lay it out, he absolutely refused to have it spoiled by trolley tracks.

All summer a gang of men had been working steadily on the new railroad, promising service by the next season. Each day brought them closer to Hardy's property, and word reached his ears that the company had planned to lay their tracks upon his roadway without first receiving his consent.

This made him more positive than ever in his refusal to consider any of their proposals, and one morning in the early fall he was awakened by the noise of pick and shovel, and arose hastily, to find a gang of men putting down rails on his property.

Hardy's anger knew no bounds and, only partially dressed, he rushed out, revolver in hand, and ordered the men off, threatening to shoot George Walker, their superintendent, if he ever set foot on his land again. He then hurried to Netcong and secured an injunction against the company, thereby blocking a new move they might make.

This had happened about four months previous, and during that time the company had brought their tracks up to the boundaries of Hardy's land. Here they were blocked, and as the spring was close at hand the traction officials were growing desperate.

So Walker had set out that morning, with instructions to yield to any favorable agreement, but to get the necessary permits, regardless of cost.

III.

MRS. HARDY'S voice brought her husband out of his stupor.

"John, what have you done?" she gasped, as her eyes quickly took in the still smoking revolver and the prostrate form.

"I've—shot—a man," was the choking reply. "Oh, why did I do it!"

Mrs. Hardy ran down the porch steps and, bending over Walker, raised his head. His eyes opened, with a far-away expression, then closed quickly as a stream of blood from a wound in his forehead ran down into them.

"John!" Mrs. Hardy called. "Come here—quickly!"

The old man's steps faltered as he hurried to where the injured man lay. Seeing the wound, and the blood trickling down his face, he moaned as he wrung his hands: "I thought I shot into the air; I only did it to scare him. I didn't mean to shoot him. Oh, what shall I do—what shall I do?"

The first shock of the tragedy had given way to a strange calmness on the part of Mrs. Hardy, and she now directed: "John, pick the poor man up

and carry him into the house. Then put on your skates and go as quickly as you can over to Netcong Landing for the doctor."

Hardy lifted the unconscious man and bore him to the sitting-room, where he laid him tenderly on the couch.

"Quick, now, John! Here are your skates," Mrs. Hardy urged.

As he rushed out of the door he said: "The ice is getting treacherous, and may break up any minute, but I'll make it."

Hardy sped down the steep steps that led to the shore and, throwing himself down on the wharf, quickly clamped on his skates and set off in the direction of the opposite shore. He covered the ice with long, steady strokes, his face expressing determination and fear. There were many air-holes, as well as places where a square had been cut out by fishermen, but the old man picked his way carefully, although there were frequent dull cracklings that proved the spring sunshine would soon be victorious over King Frost.

As Hardy neared the opposite shore he saw before him a large tract of dark, black ice which extended for some distance north and south and nearly over to the village of Netcong. He knew what it was, and wondered whether it would be safe. The ice-cutters had worked here earlier in the winter, and this was a second freezing.

He slackened his speed for the first time during his long skate, and glanced up and down the lake. The black ice seemed to be about two miles in length, extending far above and below the town. To skirt it would mean a long walk on the shore, and: "No, I'm going to try this," he burst out. "Every minute is precious, and even now"—he shuddered as he added—"I may be a criminal."

Hardy skated close to the edge of the new ice, and bore the weight of one leg on it. It seemed strong, and he slowly advanced foot by foot, but there came no crackling to warn him off. He had tested the surface sideways; but now, feeling that it was safe, a quick determination came over him and, facing toward the shor . he struck out again for it.

For some distance there was nothing to make him fear, but as he neared the beach he realized the ice was bending beneath his weight.

Hardy knew that it was too late to turn back; and, in addition to that, the doctor must be reached. Although somewhat winded by his exercise, he skated the faster and flew across the ice, that was bending and giving beneath him in an alarming way.

But the steady strokes continued, and as he reached the long steamboat wharf he gave a leap upon it and ran along the wooden framework for some distance before he could check his momentum.

When Hardy succeeded in doing this he dropped on his hands and knees and, with fingers made clumsy by nervousness, unclamped his skates, and although panting heavily from his exertions, ran swiftly in the direction of the doctor's home.

A quick pull at the bell summoned the doctor's wife, and Hardy inquired impatiently: "Is the doctor in?"

"No, Mr. Hardy," was the reply. "He was called over to Lincroft this morning, and I don't expect him back till lunch-time."

Hardy's face seemed to writhe in pain.

"What shall I do?" he groaned aloud.

"Who is sick?" queried the woman.

"I—I—there has been—there was an accident," the old man faltered; "and he may die—"

"Who?"

"Mr.—I should say, a stranger. And there isn't a doctor nearer than Dover."

Hardy pulled out his watch and added thoughtfully: "It's ten o'clock now, and"—he looked up at the woman—"even if I got word to any one there, he couldn't reach here before that three-thirty train. And you say the doctor will surely be back before then?"

"Oh, yes, He said he would be here for lunch."

"Then, as soon as he comes, tell him to come right over to our house. Don't let him delay a minute—it's a case of life and death. I'm off, and—don't even let him wait to eat his lunch, will you?"

"No, I certainly will not, Mr. Hardy," was the reply. "I hope it isn't as serious as you think."

"So do I," the old man exclaimed.

Without another word Hardy turned

and headed toward the lake again. But he dreaded to return. A feeling had come over him that the worst awaited his coming. And now this suspense seemed to drain him of all his strength and courage.

Even if the man were still alive, he might die before medical attention could reach him. And then, the awful suspense of not knowing just how severely injured he was.

Hardy stopped and glanced about him fearfully, only to realize he was all in a tremble.

"A wound in the head!" he exclaimed aloud. "Why, it's almost sure to be fatal. What shall I do—what can I do?"

Slowly Hardy continued his way toward the dock, where he once more adjusted his skates.

The sun had already shone for some hours upon the ice, and its force showed in the shallow pools of water that dotted the surface. But this escaped Hardy's notice. The only thing he saw was the murdered man in his house on the opposite shore, and he struck out for it with reckless abandon, not heeding the fact that the ice was bending beneath his weight to an alarming degree.

Suddenly, with a succession of crackling sounds, the surface sank beneath him. Hardy realized his danger and, as the huge cake upon which he stood shivered and trembled, he put all his strength into a mighty leap for the good ice. But the suddenness of the weight upon it was too much, and the portion upon which he had landed broke off completely from the main sheet.

Hardy prepared to spring again, but before he could do so the cake cracked into a number of pieces and let him through.

He came to the surface again, and called for help, but as there seemed no one in sight to heed his cries, he swam toward the edge of the ice, although the numerous cakes floating about made this rather difficult. At length he reached the brittle edge, and grasped it with his numbed fingers, but he knew that if he attempted to raise himself upon it the whole thing would give way.

So he bent all his remaining strength into calling for aid, feeling certain that some one on the shore he had just left would hear his cries and come to his rescue. At that moment a glance toward the wharf disclosed a little gathering there, and he knew his plight was discovered.

So he hung on and watched the handful of men as they hurried along the shore until they reached the old ice and then ran toward him. Although they were making all possible speed, it seemed to Hardy as if they would never reach him. He now saw they were carrying boards and planks.

Only about fifteen feet of the new ice separated Hardy from the hard, solid mass that was safe, and as the rescuers reached the edge they carefully advanced toward him, laying planks ahead of them. Their progress was slow, but the knowledge that help was so near raised the old man's hopes and brought fresh strength with it.

"We'll have you in a minute, John," one of the men called out. "Hang on."

"Take your time," Hardy replied; "and be careful of this black ice."

One of the rescuers was almost at the edge now, and as he pushed the plank before him it reached the man in the water.

"Don't touch it," the other warned, as he carefully worked his way to the edge. Then he reached over and, seizing Hardy's extended hand, slowly pulled him out of the water.

It was careful, tedious work, and every instant it seemed that the ice would again break and drop them both into the lake. But at length Hardy was out upon the plank, and crawling on hands and knees toward the safe surface.

As he reached it he was surrounded by his rescuers and, straightening up on his skates again, he said, through his chattering teeth: "Well, boys, I thought I was a goner that time."

"It was a pretty close call, John," one of the men assented. "Just by luck Perkins happened to be down at the dock, and heard you call."

"But this isn't any place for you to be standing," another put in. "You'd better come back to town and get some dry clothes."

"No; I'm going—home." This was said almost under his breath.

"Better not," another cautioned. "It's five miles across the lake, John. The village is the best place for you to go."

"Not this time. I'll skate fast and keep warm till I reach my home. I'll not catch cold, or anything else. Things may be different in a day or two, and"—his voice changed suddenly—"boys, I haven't time to thank you for the help you gave me just now. I may need some of a different kind soon, and I wonder if you will be as ready then as you were to-day."

"What do you mean?" came in a chorus from the little group.

Hardy shook his head and, turning, dashed off in the direction of his home, calling a good-by over his shoulder.

For some distance he raced on, but at length glanced around, to see the little group slowly making their way back to the village.

"Perhaps it would have been better if I had gone down," he mused grimly. "They didn't know, but they will soon enough."

Even if the sun did shine brightly there was still the winter frost in the air, and, although in a perspiration, Hardy's clothes were now frozen quite stiff, and greatly impeded his progress. Still he raced on, putting forth every effort to keep up his speed, and soon neared his own landing. Here his numbed fingers slowly unclasped his skates, and he made his way painfully up the steep walk to his house.

His wife was anxiously awaiting his return, and stood framed in the open door as he approached.

"John, what has happened?" she queried in alarm.

"I—fell—in," he replied through his chattering teeth. "How's the—man—Walker?"

"Resting comfortably, I think. But you must hurry and change your clothes. How soon will the doctor be here?"

Hardy gave vent to a gesture of despair.

"I don't—know. Soon, I hope."

He closed the door behind him, and strode unsteadily toward the room where the injured man lay. Their eyes met, and for a moment neither spoke.

"Well, Mr. Walker," the old man began slowly, "I guess you will get your road through all right now. After I'm in prison you'll do as you wish regarding my property."

"How do you mean?" the other queried blankly.

"You know how I mean," Hardy returned, with grim emphasis. "You may get over the wound—Heaven knows I hope you do, because I didn't intend to shoot you—and then you'll put the matter in the hands of the law. I don't blame you, man. Perhaps—"

"But I do not understand," Walker broke in.

"Perhaps I'd do the same if I were in your place," the other continued, not heeding the interruption. "But it's hard on me and my wife."

Walker had stared directly at Hardy during his speech, and there was an awkward pause at its conclusion, broken by his query: "Why, Mr. Hardy, what has happened? Your clothes are frozen stiff."

Hardy glanced contemptuously at his garments.

"Nothing much," he declared. "I only tried to get the doctor for you. It was the least I could do after what had happened, even if it was unintentional. I skated over to Netcong, but the ice was weak, and I fell into the lake."

"And the doctor?" Walker queried eagerly. "When will he be here? You need him far more than I do."

Hardy shook his head despairingly.

"I don't know. He was not at home, and is not expected back till after lunch. He will come right over then, though. But, tell me, how are you feeling? How is your head?"

"Oh, it pains some, of course," Walker replied, placing his hand upon the bandage Mrs. Hardy had tied over the wound. Then, as he gazed into the old man's face, he added: "Why did you try to summon aid?"

"Because it was the least I could do, under the circumstances," was the reply.

"Mr. Hardy, there is more than that you can do for me. I really know I should not bring the subject up, being here in your own house as I am, but there is so much more that you can do for me that, if you did it, I should always consider you one of my best friends."

"In Heaven's name, man, tell me what it is?" Hardy pleaded, leaning forward in his chair. "If it is in my power—"

"It is," the other interrupted. "I refer to the permits for the right of way through your road."

The injured man raised himself on his elbow, and carefully studied the other's face.

"But — but — that's not for you," Hardy returned in tones of disappointment. "That's for the railroad, and I want to do something for you personally. Suppose you should die—"

"From what?" Walker broke in.

"Why, from your wound."

"This?" Walker laughed, pointing to his bandage.

"Yes, and caused by me," Hardy replied despairingly.

"Do not fear, Mr. Hardy. It is really nothing. I was stunned at first, and my head does pain a little now, but it will soon pass away."

"You are sure?" the old man exclaimed, in a voice that betrayed his doubt of the good news.

"Why, of course." Walker was surprised at Hardy's agitation. "I don't blame you—"

"And you won't prosecute me and send me to jail?"

"Why, of course not, Mr. Hardy, and here is my hand on it. But, look here, you need a little attention yourself. Get out of those wet clothes immediately. You should have done so as soon as you returned."

"Not till I sign those permits," Hardy declared. "Got them with you?"

Walker sat up on the couch and, for a man with a bullet in his head, displayed remarkable agility.

"Yes, here they are," he said, drawing them from his pocket.

Hardy seized the papers with his trembling fingers and, stepping over to his desk with a strange eagerness, placed his name upon them, although his hand shook so that his signature was barely decipherable.

As he handed the document back he said, in a voice full of feeling: "Mr. Walker, you are a man I am glad to know, and I want to know you better. Any man who receives a bullet from another's revolver, and then accepts a mere signature as recompense for the act, is—well, there aren't many like you, and I wish you and your railroad every possible success."

"I thank you, but—"

"Mr. Walker, if you had prosecuted me it would have killed two people—my wife and myself."

"But why should I have prosecuted you?" the other queried.

"If shooting a man in the head isn't cause—"

"Who have you shot in the head?" Walker interrupted.

Hardy advanced to the couch.

"Heavens, man, has it affected your brain? Why, you, of course. That wound under the bandage, and the bullet in your head."

Walker straightened up and gazed intently at the man before him for a moment without speaking. Then he began calmly:

"Mr. Hardy, I see it all now, although I give you my word I did not before. This wound on my head"—he tapped his forehead—"was not made by any bullet from your revolver, as I now realize you seem to think. It was caused by a sharp piece of ice I fell upon."

Hardy was too astonished to speak, and grasped the other's arm excitedly. Then he burst out:

"Don't speak that way—don't tease an old man. It's affected your brain. Oh, why *doesn't* that doctor come?"

Walker rose to his feet.

"Mr. Hardy, listen to me, and do not excite yourself this way."

Then he seized the bandage around his forehead and tore it off.

"Look at it for yourself. It's only a deep cut, and I can't let you blame yourself, even if you do demand the return of those permits. If you signed them thinking you had shot me, I return them. Here—they are yours."

"But—your—fall!" the other gasped.

"A trick I learned in the West when a boy. Even if injured, it generally prevents the second shot that might follow if one stood up. No man will fire at another who has dropped. My forehead struck a sharp piece of ice and, besides the cut, I was pretty well stunned. That's all there is to it."

He glanced toward the papers in his extended hand.

"Do you want these?" he added.

A great light of joy spread over the old man's face as he grasped the extended hand. "I'll take the hand, but not the papers, and may Heaven bless you for what you have just told me. And I know it's true, too. You are not hurt after all, and I'm the happiest person in the world. You'll never know the load of anxiety you have taken off my conscience."

But Walker only glanced again at the documents he held in his hand.

"The papers?" he said simply.

"Keep them," Hardy exclaimed with a wave of his hand. "And if the road is as good a one as you are a man I'll be satisfied. Why, look here, even if I didn't shoot you, you could have prosecuted me for—what would they call it—assault?"

Walker smiled.

"No, I could not, because I was a trespasser upon your property."

Here the old man chuckled.

"Well, I guess it's a good thing all around that the doctor wasn't home. If he had come back with me, and told me you were not shot at all—well, perhaps I might have thought you were trying to work me, and those permits might still be unsigned. And—"

"John, here comes the doctor," Mrs. Hardy interrupted. "Shall I send him in?"

"Not for me," Walker said firmly.

"Yes, now he's here, you've *got* to see him," Hardy asserted.

Before Walker could object the doctor was ushered into the room.

"Good morning, John," was his greeting. "I returned quicker than I expected, and came right over in the sleigh. What seems to be the trouble with you?"

"Mr. Walker here," Hardy replied, with a twinkle in his eye, "fell on the ice and cut his head. It stunned him, and I thought he was badly hurt. But he seems to be all right now."

The doctor advanced to the injured man, and critically examined the wound. Then he announced: "Rather deep cut, but nothing serious; does not even need a stitch taken in it. It's only—" He stopped short, and for the first time noted Hardy's wet clothes, and also observed that his face seemed unusually flushed.

"Why, John, what have you been doing?" he queried.

"He fell into the lake on the way back from your house," Mrs. Hardy explained.

The doctor felt the old man's pulse, then turned to the wife.

"Get this man to bed as quickly as possible. He has a fever now, but I think we can check it and have him around all right by to-morrow. Go, John; I'll treat you after you are in bed."

"I must be leaving, Mr. Hardy," Walker said quietly. "I hope you will be all right in the morning. I'll drop in to see you then. I'll be working in front of your house, you know."

For reply the old man only smiled and left the room, closely followed by his wife.

"John Hardy was building a splendid foundation for a good spell of sickness," the doctor declared, as the railroad man turned toward the door. "He'll be all right in the morning, but it's mighty lucky for him that I came as soon as I did."

"Yes," Walker agreed thoughtfully. "Although it might have been better for him had you come sooner. But if you had—well, things might have been different for me."

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## AN UNSPOKEN PROMISE.

You never bade me hope, 'tis true;
I asked you not to swear;
But I looked in those eyes of blue,
And read a promise there.

*Gerald Griffin.*

# SHIPMATES WITH HORROR.*

By JOHNSTON McCULLEY,

Author of "Land of Lost Hope," etc.

**Terrible happenings on a voyage that battled against greater odds than the usual perils of the sea.**

## SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

A SEA-CAPTAIN, Benton by name, who has been dismissed from the employ of Howard & Co. under suspicion of having sold out to another firm, is promised reinstatement if he can win a contract from the Phelps Company by bringing the ship Calexico to the San Diego wharf in six days' time. The Calexico has gained an evil repute, and Benton, hampered by a man named Bately, who is in the pay of Phelps, has much trouble in finding a crew. Bately is finally forced by Rench, Benton's first mate, to take service on the schooner.

The voyage is marked by strange and fearful happenings. Human skulls appear from nowhere, the ship's bell is rung by unseen hands. Benton and Rench, going below to investigate, are knocked down from behind by some mysterious force; and to cap the climax, a beautiful young girl appears suddenly on deck and moves about among the men, silent and apparently unhearing. The sailors, frantic with superstitious dread, desert in one of the boats; but Benton is still determined to make San Diego within the prescribed time, and with a crew composed of his mates, Rench and Halsey, the two engineers, Evans and Carter, and the man Bately, who has promised not to do anything to delay the voyage, he manages to make some sort of progress. That very night, however, the ship is struck by a terrific storm, in the midst of which the propeller-shaft of the engine breaks with a crash. The engineers accuse Bately of tampering with the machinery, but as he has been busy stoking all the time they are forced to admit that he cannot be responsible.

## CHAPTER XII.

### IN STRESS OF WEATHER.

BENTON noticed that the engines had stopped. He ran down to the engine-room and burst in at the door.

"What is it?" he cried.

"Propeller-shaft," the engineer answered.

"Then we're down and out?"

"We can repair it, but not in this storm."

"The storm's good for twenty-four hours or more."

"We can't do a thing while it's raging," said Evans. "I'm sorry, sir."

"Get at it, then, as soon as possible."

"Yes, sir."

Benton went on deck again, and confided this new disaster to Rench. A heavy sea struck the ship just then, its full force near the wheel. Benton staggered, but was swept off his feet and to the rail. There he clung while the sea broke over him.

There was a sharp crash, and a part of the rail, not twenty feet from where he was holding on, was swept away.

"If I had been there—" he thought.

He started to make his way back to the wheel. He saw that Rench lay limp in the lashings. The big mate was unconscious.

Benton ran to the cabin, screaming for Halsey. The boy came quickly, his deep sleep interrupted again. They got Rench up and carried him below. Then Halsey lashed himself to the wheel.

"Engines out," Benton roared through the wind. "Hold her where she is."

Now that the engines were not working, Bately was of no use below. Carter could keep the fires going sufficiently to keep them alive, and that was all that was necessary.

Benton went to the engine-room again, and ordered Bately on deck. All the

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lamps on the schooner were out, and Bately was ordered to light them again. He succeeded in doing so after many attempts.

The storm seemed to increase in fury. In the darkness nothing could be seen except, now and then, a white bank of spray and seething water. The ship rode the waves blindly, whether toward safety or destruction they did not know.

At the wheel, Halsey, his teeth set into his lower lip to nerve himself, struggled to obey the captain's orders. It seemed, at times, that the wheel would be torn from his grasp, or his arms wrenched from their sockets. Benton did not dare send Bately to help him, for Bately was needed elsewhere; and, besides, it would have been bad generalship.

A single sea could put both Halsey and Bately out of the running if they were together, and leave the Calexico at the mercy of the waves.

Down below, Carter and Evans tried to estimate the damage. It was a difficult task; but they managed to discover what havoc the crash had wrought, and started to do the necessary preliminary work of repair.

And so the schooner rode for another two hours, in the darkness and the uncertainty.

The storm did not abate when morning broke. Its fury seemed to increase, if anything. Every man on board was exhausted with the unequal struggle, but there was no opportunity for rest, no thought of rest. Benton's motives for a safe arrival at San Diego on time, the mysteries that had surrounded the ship—everything was subordinated to the necessity for keeping afloat, the necessity for saving their lives.

And, though it was morning, little could be seen. Spray made things invisible a few feet away. Benton looked at Halsey every few minutes, wondering how long the boy would last. Below, in the cabin, the girl, without saying a word, had done her best to restore Rench to consciousness, and, succeeding in that, was trying to calm him.

He raved like a madman—he had not escaped injury from the force of the sea, and the pains in his right side told him that his ribs were crushed. He would have cursed but for the girl's presence—not only because of the injury, but because it had come at such a time, when he was needed so sorely at his post of duty.

"I wonder—" he began.

Then he remembered that, supposedly, the girl could not hear. He wasn't aware that Benton had caught her—that she had betrayed herself.

She handed him pencil and paper when his lips moved, but he smiled sorrowfully and pushed them away. Rench, good man of the sea though he was, had been schooled in the hard university of experience, wherein writing was not a part of the course.

He managed to make her understand, by his painful gestures, that he was worrying about how things were going on deck. She indicated that she would go and see. He tried to persuade her, by motions, to remain—tried to tell her of the danger. But she smiled at him confidently, and went out.

Benton saw her as she reached the deck and stopped for a moment to get her breath, with her back to the wind. He made his way to her side swiftly.

"Go back!" he cried. "There is danger!"

She shook her head negatively.

"You'll be swept away!" Benton cried in her ear. "Go back, girl, go back!"

Instead of answering, she looked to see who was at the wheel, and found Halsey struggling to defeat the purpose of the angry sea. A wistful look came into her eyes as she watched him. Then, as she saw him wrench back the wheel as the sea would have torn it from him, her eyes flashed with admiration. But she gave Benton scant attention.

"Go back!" he cried once more. "The storm is worse than you think! Remember what it did to my big mate! You'll be swept away, or crushed to death against the rail! It's dangerous!"

She turned and looked at him. Then her arms went into the air as though to embrace the battling elements. Over her face flashed a look of excitement. She spoke—for the first time since she had appeared to them.

"Danger!" she cried. "I love it!"

Her voice rang clear as a bell above the roar of the wind. She left Benton and staggered across the deck, the wind whipping her skirts.

A sea struck her, and Benton sprang toward her quickly. But she had turned her back to it; and after it had passed, she was standing safely in the middle of the deck, drenched but laughing merrily.

"Danger!" she cried again. "In the sea? I am pleased when it is angry! It is beautiful then!"

The wind drowned her words; none but Benton heard them. But Bately, coming aft, saw her, and stood still in his amazement at her daring. Halsey, at the wheel, saw her too, and wondered whether the captain was going to let her remain on deck.

Benton started to follow, to urge her to go below and attend Rench, or do anything that would keep her from danger. He admired the spirit she displayed, but he knew it was foolhardy. If she was swept away, if disaster of any kind overtook her, her secret might be lost to them forever.

She walked away from him as he approached and went toward the wheel. Benton caught up with her.

"Please go below," he said, accompanying his words with a gesture.

"The sea is my friend; it will not hurt me," she answered.

"You'll not go below—not even if I order it?"

Her eyes flashed at his words.

"You are captain of this ship," she replied, "but you are also a courteous gentleman, as I have reason to know, and will not antagonize the wishes of a woman. And I wish to remain on deck at present."

"But my mate—? Cannot you do something for him?"

"I have done everything I can; I'll go below presently."

With that answer, she turned away from him again and fought against the wind to an exposed place at the rail. And there she stood defiantly, now and then stretching out her arms to the angry sea, and smiled at it.

"Of all the fool things!" Bately growled to himself. "If I was the captain, she'd go below, if I had to carry her! There she goes—"

Benton uttered a cry of warning at the same moment. A mountainous sea hurled itself aboard, the ship rolled, and the weight of water descended upon her.

Benton and Bately fought to save themselves, and it was a hard fight. Gasping, they emerged unscathed. The girl was gone—the secret gone with her, Benton supposed.

He turned to look at the rail where she had been standing. Part of it had been torn away; but on deck, drenched, her hair hanging loosely about her shoulders, the smile on her lips, stood the girl.

Benton gave a cry of amazement. How she had escaped when the rail went over, he could not conjecture.

But Bately had looked past the girl to the wheel, and another cry escaped him—but a cry of alarm.

In the lashings Halsey was hanging limp, his arms dropped lifelessly at his sides, his head thrown back. The wheel was free—free to whirl the Calexico into the face of the sea and carry her to destruction.

Bately dashed for it. But the girl was before him. Ere he could reach the spot—before Benton could get half-way across the deck, she had grasped it, and brought the ship's bow around. As they gained her side, she threw back her head and laughed.

But when Benton reached for Halsey, to cut him from the lashings, the laugh died on her lips, and there was tenderness in her eyes as she looked down at the unconscious second mate.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### AN OFFER OF AID DECLINED.

BATELY took the wheel; and when Benton lifted Halsey's unconscious form and carried it to the cabin, the girl followed him. The second mate was placed in the bunk, and the girl, pushing Benton to one side, began to examine him.

Rench turned painfully and observed them.

"Halsey hurt?" he asked.

"Yes—at the wheel," answered Benton. "That's luck for you, and it wouldn't happen twice in a hundred years—two men hurt at the same spot in one storm."

"Well, this doesn't appear to be a usual trip," commented Rench.

He tried to turn again, and groaned.

"Awfully sorry I went down and out, cap'n," he apologized. "Th' hospital for me, I guess, when we get to port."

"I'm sorry for you, Rench; I'll see that you have every attention."

"How is everything?"

"Carter and Evans are doing all they can below, but they can't do much in this storm. Bately has the wheel. I'm the rest of the crew."

Benton was trying hard to smile, but the tears were near to flowing. It looked dark now—dark, indeed.

He knew the storm was driving the ship out of her track, perhaps miles away from it. And he had three days to put her alongside the wharf at San Diego, for it was midday now. The engines were at a standstill with important repairs to be made—repairs that would necessitate half-speed at best even if they *were* made. Even if the schooner rode out the storm in safety, it was doubtful whether Benton could win. And if he failed—!

He dashed his hand across his eyes. His whole future was at stake; and if he failed, loss of vindication, of position, inevitable blacklisting forever would be his lot. He was as good as ruined. This was his last chance—his only chance—and it looked as though he would fail.

But he could fight! He could fight as man never fought before, no matter what the odds—fight until the last minute was come, and the last chance gone, because he knew he was in the right, and that gave him strength.

"Halsey hurt bad?" Rench asked weakly.

The girl spoke up.

"He'll be all right in half an hour," she said.

Rench half rose from the bunk, in spite of the pain, and looked at her.

"What? You can talk?" he said.

"Never mind that, Rench," said Captain Benton quickly. "We haven't time to discuss matters now. I must get back on deck—the girl will care for you."

He looked at her as he spoke, and she nodded. She was working to bring Halsey back to consciousness. He was badly bruised, and half-drowned, but there were no bones broken. The girl had spoken the truth—he would be all right in half an hour, although in pain.

Benton left them and hurried to the deck. Bately was standing at the wheel, controlling the lifeless ship. The storm seemed to be abating some. Yet the danger was not yet over, for gigantic seas still boarded the craft and crushed to bits the lower rigging.

Down below, Rench watched the girl as she attended to Halsey.

"I hope he ain't hurt bad," he remarked.

"I don't think he is," she said.

"I wish you'd tell me some things I want to know."

"What are they?" she asked.

"Where were you hiding down below? And who are you, and why did you board this ship?"

She turned upon him angrily.

"I am willing to help you all I can," she said; "but I must ask you not to question me, for I shall not answer you. You have no right—no one but your captain has a right!"

Her eyes were flashing, and Rench realized that he had gone too far.

"Beg pardon, miss," he said. "I was just curious. I don't want to make you mad."

She did not answer, but still worked over Halsey. Presently the boy groaned, and opened his eyes.

"What—what—" he began.

"Be quiet for a moment," she said swiftly. "The heavy sea half killed you."

"But—who's on deck? Who's at the wheel?"

"The other man."

"Bately?"

"I do not know his name," she replied.

"Yes—it's Bately," said Rench.

"And the cap'n is all alone on deck with Bately in this storm?"

"Never mind, youngster. The cap'n will pull us through! It's all my blanked fault. I ought to have more sense than to get smashed when I'm needed."

Halsey started to rise, but the girl pushed him back gently.

"But I've got to get on deck and help the cap'n," he protested.

"Rest a while," she told him tenderly. "You're badly bruised, and you're weak. You'd be useless on deck now. I'll go up with you pretty soon."

"You—you—" began Halsey. "Why, you can talk!"

She turned away from him.

"Shut up!" growled Rench. "'Course she can talk! But don't you get gay and excited, and ask questions, for she won't stand for it. Just be glad she's fixin' you up! Don't ask questions — cap'n's orders!"

"I ain't asking anything," pouted Halsey.

She turned toward him, and she was smiling.

"I'm going on deck now," she said. "Will you promise to remain here and rest until I come for you?"

Halsey grinned back at her.

"If you say so," he replied.

"I do say so; and you must obey your nurse's orders."

Without awaiting his reply, she hurried from the cabin. Benton walked up to her as she reached the deck.

"The second mate is conscious," she reported. "He wanted to come on deck, but I made him promise to lie quiet for a time."

"He's a nervy boy!" commented Captain Benton. "He's got more backbone than half the old sailors I know."

She seemed pleased at his praise of Halsey.

"As soon as you need him, I'll go for him," she volunteered.

"Let the boy rest," he said. "We don't need him now."

He went forward to attend to some duties, and the girl walked toward the wheel, watching Bately as he struggled against the power of the sea.

Bately had been puzzling over the girl since she first appeared. Now he beckoned her, and she approached.

"Are you working for the Phelps people?" he asked.

For a moment she looked him straight in the eyes.

"Are you?" she inquired in turn.

"I was," answered Bately. "I had the job of keeping the cap'n from getting hands."

"You did? And you failed?"

"I failed," said Bately. "And the big mate—I had him cornered, I thought caught me at it, and made me ship."

"How could he make you ship? Did they shanghai you?"

Bately's face flushed.

"They threatened to beat me to death if I didn't sign," he said.

"And so you signed, of course?" with fine scorn in her voice.

"I signed," he admitted. "The mate is more of a man than I am. But I did the best I could before that. And what have you done? What have you done for Phelps?"

"Did I say I was working for Phelps?" she asked.

"You didn't *say* so."

"Very well, then."

"Well, I didn't think there'd be any harm in asking if you were. But why on earth did you show yourself? Are you able to do more on deck than below?"

Her face flushed angrily, but when she spoke she had regained her composure.

"Have you done anything on deck—for Phelps?" she asked.

"No—and I'm not going to," he said.

"Why?"

"Well, I didn't think much about it when I took the job, except that it was a chance to make easy money. I thought that the Howard firm would simply be losing a contract, and losing it wouldn't put them out of business, whereas the money I'd make, if I had luck, would help me. Understand? I didn't think of anybody but the firm."

"Well?"

"Well—now I'm thinking of some one else. I like a good, clean man when I see one. This Benton! You don't know what he's up against, I suppose."

"No," she replied.

"I'll tell you. About a year and a half ago he was accused by his firm of selling them out of a contract, and he wasn't guilty. Understand? It hurt him like blazes; it wouldn't have hurt a man that wasn't naturally white. I found out, after I was forced to ship, that this trip means everything to him.

"They told him—the firm, I mean—that if he got this ship to San Diego on time he could have complete vindication, and back pay, and a regular ship. If he fails, he goes down and out, and to the

dogs, because he'll be blacklisted again, and no owner will have him on board a ship. See?"

"You mean—"

"I mean just that—if he wins, he wins everything; and if he loses, there ain't another chance in the world for him. And he's a decent man, too! He's square, if ever a man was square! When I found out all this stuff, I realized how dirty it was to try to make him lose.

"Of course, I can't help him—I mean I can't go out of my way to do it—because I was tied down to Phelps; but I'll not do a thing to hinder him, either. And I'll obey orders, because I'm shipped as a common sailor."

"I didn't know," she said.

"And there's another thing, though hardly any one knows it. He's got a girl. He was just about to marry her when he got fired and blacklisted. He swore that he wouldn't go near her again until he had squared himself and proved he was innocent, and had a good job once more. And he's kept his word! We talked a good deal about it around the water-front at first; then we forgot it. I'll bet he hasn't forgotten it, though, even if he doesn't talk about it. You'd never think there was a girl in the case to look at him, would you? Well, he's simply made up his mind to forget her until he can go to her with clean hands."

"I'm sorry," she said. "But the girl—"

"I know the girl, by sight. And I know that she won't have anything to do with any other man; and she respects him enough to stay away from him, and trusts him to make it all right some day. That little girl's waiting for him—and she believes in him, too. She doesn't even know he's having this chance. Just think what it means to him if he loses."

"Just think what it means to *her!*" she cried. "And you fought him—fought the girl? You coward!"

Bately's face flushed.

"You don't understand," he said. "I thought that they'd given him a regular job, and that he was just trying to win for the firm. I didn't know, until after they forced me to sign, that this was his try-out; and as soon as I learned it, I was decent enough to make up my mind that I wouldn't stand in his way any more. And you need not hand me any of your fine scorn, my young lady. If you were working for Phelps, too—"

"Stop!" she cried. "I didn't know—I didn't know! Oh, what low, mean cowards we all have been — fighting a man like him—trying to kill him off and send him down to ruin, and trying to break the heart of that poor girl! I wish I had known!"

"Well, we didn't know," said Bately. "But how did you get in this game—you, a girl? Where were you down below? And what else is down there? How did you do it, anyway?"

"Stop—you make me despise myself!" she retorted. "I shall tell everything when I get ready—but I'll tell it to Captain Benton, and to no other. And I want to help him now! I want him to win! Oh, how I hope he'll win! And you wait until I see that man Phelps again!"

"Maybe Phelps didn't know, either! Maybe he thought he was just fighting the Howard firm, the same as we thought!"

"I hope, for his sake, that what you say is true. If he did know, and planned what he planned, I'll — I'll horsewhip him!"

"You seem mighty interested in Benton all at once," said Bately.

"Benton?" she laughed. "I like a clean man, of course; and I hope he'll win. But I'm not thinking of him; I'm thinking of that poor girl!"

She turned away from him quickly and went toward the rail. He looked after her.

"Thinking of the girl," muttered Bately. "Wouldn't that jar you!"

Benton called an order just then, and Bately altered the ship's course. The storm had fallen considerably. The Calexico was a broken thing, wrecked and ruined — her engines disabled, her upper works torn away, her rigging in rags and broken ends. Her position was something the captain could not tell—and it was less than three days until the hour when he should have the ship alongside the wharf at San Diego.

In the next hour he noticed a large steamer coming up off the port bow. She seemed to be making in the direction of the Calexico. Benton got the glass and

watched her whenever the schooner rose on the crest of a heavy sea.

An hour passed, with the situation on the deck of the Calexico remaining the same, and the steamer drawing nearer. Benton could make her out now. She was the Birmingham, one of the Phelps ships, coming in from the South Seas.

Bately watched the on-coming ship, too, and so did the girl, but neither said anything concerning the stranger. That she intended to speak the Calexico, there was no doubt. Benton smiled grimly when he was assured of this fact.

The steamer approached as near as she dared, and her captain megaphoned:

"Ahoy, Calexico!"

"Ahoy!" shouted Benton.

"Want any help?"

"Not from a Phelps boat!"

"But you're disabled; we can tell that!"

"Don't need your help!" replied Benton firmly.

"You fool! We'll help you to Frisco!"

"We're bound for San Diego!"

"You're bound for the bottom, if you don't accept our help!"

"Then we'll go to the bottom!"

The captain of the Birmingham cursed at what he termed Benton's insanity. He did not know, of course, of the circumstances; and thought Benton was refusing aid merely because the ship that offered it was that of a rival firm.

"Better be sensible!" he called. "You're disabled, and you've got no crew!"

"How do you know that?" Benton demanded angrily.

"Because," shouted the captain of the Birmingham in reply, "we've got your crew aboard!"

## CHAPTER XIV.

### AN ATTEMPT THAT FAILED.

"WHAT's that?" Benton cried.

"We've got your crew aboard—picked 'em up."

"You're carrying poor cargo, then," roared Benton. "They're a set of cowardly curs!"

"They say they deserted because the ship was sinking."

"They lie, then! They deserted before the storm came."

"Do you want 'em?" asked the captain of the Birmingham.

Benton hesitated a moment.

"Yes," he cried finally.

"How do you expect to get 'em in this heavy sea?"

"Haven't you got a boat-crew with nerve enough to row 'em over?" asked Benton. "Send a couple of revolvers and some ammunition along with 'em, too. They mutinied, and knocked out me and my mate."

"They did, eh?" cried the captain of the Birmingham. "Well, I ain't supposed to have much love for a Howard boat; but I don't protect any cowardly curs that mutiny on board ship. I'll send 'em over, cap'n."

On the Birmingham preparations were being made to lower a boat. As Benton watched grimly, the girl came across the deck and stood beside him.

"What are you going to do with them when you have them?" she asked. "You cannot trust them to work, for they expect a prison sentence for their mutiny, and they'll get possession of the ship the first chance they have. What can you do with one man who won't help you, and two who can't help you because they aren't able to?"

"They'll go into the forecastle as prisoners, and they'll be guarded until we get to port," said Benton firmly. "I don't intend to give them a chance to work."

"It is very risky," she said.

"You cannot speak of risk sincerely to me," he replied, smiling. "I saw you on deck in the face of a heavy sea, laughing at the storm."

"I love storms," she said. "And I think you're splendid because you have so much courage. I hope I can help you some way. I want to help you more than you think—not only for yourself, but for the girl."

She spoke softly, but he whirled upon her when he caught her words.

"The girl?" he said, puzzled.

"Yes," she answered. "I know all about it; and I hope you'll win."

There was a look of pain in his face as he turned away from her. He had been trying honestly to forget the girl

until such time as he could stand before her completely vindicated. But the thought of her did him good now, for it urged him on.

"I will win!" he muttered as he watched the boat being lowered from the Birmingham.

As the boat got away from the big steamer successfully and the crew began the hard pull to the Calexico, Benton asked the girl to tell Halsey to come on deck. She went below and delivered the message, and helped the second mate to gain his feet. He was weak, but he was of some service.

"What's going on?" Rench asked her from his bunk.

"We have spoken the Birmingham. They picked up your crew, and they are returning the men to you."

Rench's eyes blazed.

"That's just my luck," he complained. "Before I get out of the hospital, they'll be in jail. And then I won't get a chance to have a little argument with the chap that floored me up on deck! What's the cap'n going to do with 'em?"

"He says they're going into the forecastle as prisoners, and that they'll be guarded until we make port."

"Good for the cap'n," commented Rench.

The girl went on deck again. The boat was drawing near the Calexico, and those on board the schooner could see the five men whose faces betrayed the fear their hearts knew.

The sea was running heavily, and it was dangerous business landing the men. The members of the Birmingham's crew worked heroically. One loaded revolver and a small box of ammunition were thrown upon the deck at Benton's feet, but the second revolver he had requested fell short as the schooner rolled and was lost in the sea.

Then the men, one at a time, as they could be landed, came up the side with difficulty in the face of the revolver held by Benton. The captain lined them up, and watched them while he held conversation with the man in charge of the Birmingham's boat.

"My compliments to your captain," he said, "and tell him I'll not forget this. Hope I'll get a chance to repay him some day."

"Our cap'n says to tell you," the man replied, "that he ain't got any sympathy for men who mutiny and desert a good ship. He says to tell you he wishes he had to deal with 'em himself!"

Then the boat pulled rapidly away, and Benton turned toward those before him on his own deck.

"You curs!" he said. "Nice sailormen you are, to lose your heads because you got scared, and put out your officers and leave a good ship in fair weather! It's expensive business—losing your common sense! You're liable to learn it!"

"Cap'n—" began one of the men.

"Silence! You go to the forecastle as prisoners under arrest—every one of you. I can't put you all in irons, and you know it; but you're going to be guarded, and the first man that makes a move will be shot down like a dog! Mr. Halsey!"

"Here, sir!"

"Take these men to the forecastle, and order them to their bunks. If they attempt a move to escape from the forecastle, shoot—and shoot to kill. Here is a revolver!"

"Aye, aye, sir," Halsey said.

"I hold you responsible for these men, Mr. Halsey."

"They'll not escape, sir," said the boy firmly.

He took the revolver and ordered the men forward. They went, muttering among themselves, black looks on their faces. Only the old man did not seem to care, did not seem to realize the predicament he was in. Now that he was again on board the Calexico, his weird chant began:

"I'm afraid! Blood and bones! Blood and bones!"

Halsey got his men in the forecastle, and sat down by the door on a box, holding the revolver before him, ready for instant use if necessary. The girl followed and looked in upon the men, but she said nothing, and soon returned to the deck.

It was late in the afternoon now, and the Calexico was still drifting lifelessly, at the mercy of the wind and the currents.

Carter and Evans were hard at work below, now that the storm had abated,

trying to repair the propeller-shaft. Bately kept the wheel; Rench lay in his bunk and groaned, and cursed the luck that had left him a wounded man at an hour when he was needed badly.

Toward evening the girl disappeared, and Benton was becoming anxious about her, when she emerged from the galley with a pot of steaming coffee, some biscuits, and boiled potatoes. She carried some to Benton.

"You're very kind," he said.

The tears sprang into her eyes.

"Kind? I've been a brute," she replied. "But I didn't know what I was doing. I thought I was fighting a firm —I didn't know I was fighting a clean, honest man—and a girl."

"Don't you want to tell me anything —explain anything?" he asked her.

"Not now," she said, turning away. "I must carry food to the others. You will know everything soon."

She went away, and afterward Benton saw her go below with food. She returned after a time, and carried some to Bately, and after he had eaten she went to the forecastle with Halsey's share.

"Give me the revolver while you eat," she said. "I'll watch them."

The boy hesitated.

"You don't trust me?" she asked, her face flushing.

"I trust you," he replied; "but the cap'n's orders—"

"You are right," she answered. "Obey orders—always!"

And so Halsey ate with the revolver in one hand, watching his prisoners closely; and, because his one hand was thus engaged, the girl sat down beside him, and helped to feed him, laughing at the situation.

But the men in the bunks did not laugh. They watched the food as Halsey ate, and growled among themselves. The old man kept up his chant:

"Blood and bones! I'm afraid!"

The girl took food to Rench after Halsey had finished eating, and soon after that appeared in the forecastle again, with some for the prisoners. Halsey allowed one man to leave his bunk at a time, to eat.

While this slow meal was in progress the girl sat beside Halsey, talking to him. He did not ask any questions of her, though there were many things he wanted to know. And after a time she bade him good-by and went back to the deck.

It was beginning to grow dark. Bately was still at the wheel, and Captain Benton was pacing back and forth nervously, thinking of the situation.

Every man aboard, with the exception of the prisoners, was greatly in need of sleep, and weak from the battle with the storm. Five desperate men had to be watched by one boy. Evans and Carter had all they could do below; Bately was needed at the wheel, and Rench was out of the accounting.

"I don't know how we'll last the night," Benton said.

The girl heard him.

"Why?" she asked.

"The men below have to work at the repairs without sleep; the man at the wheel cannot leave it to rest; one must guard the prisoners, one watch the deck."

"It does look difficult," she said.

"Evans and Carter will work until they drop," he went on. "I can depend upon Halsey, and I can force the man at the wheel to stay there. But Halsey is badly hurt, though he won't admit it, and the pain and loss of sleep combined may cause him to relax his vigilance. If the prisoners should get control of the ship—"

"What would happen?" she asked.

"They are accused of mutiny, and face prison. Under those circumstances, anything may happen. They are desperate."

"And you can't trust them to work the ship?"

Benton smiled.

"If I told them they were forgiven, and asked them to return to duty, they would not believe me," he said. "They would think it was a trick to get them to work, and that I would hand them over to the law, anyway, when we got to port."

"If you had another man—" she began.

"I'd feel safe if I had another man; but another man is out of the question."

"Yes—but a woman isn't."

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"I want to help you to win—for the girl's sake. Can't I do something?"

"I wouldn't ask it of you."

"But I want to help."

"You may, then, if we absolutely need you," he said. "You are very kind."

"'Tis you who are kind. From the manner in which I came on board your ship, you are at liberty to place me in irons, to think what you will of me. And, instead of getting what I deserve, I get courtesy from you. 'Tis you who are kind, Captain Benton."

"You are doing your share," he said, smiling at her. "You did a great deal when you prepared food for us."

In an hour or so the darkness came. The Caxelico still rolled and pitched in a heavy sea, though the storm had abated; but it had not passed, Benton knew. It would return soon, and the second blow would be as bad, if not worse, than the first.

His object was to get the machinery repaired before the second blow came. Then the schooner would have some chance. The storm had caused him to lose half the distance he had gained, and at noon the following day he would have only forty-eight hours before him in which to put the Calexico alongside her wharf at San Diego.

At midnight he still paced the deck. Bately remained at the wheel, though his arms ached and his eyes were heavy with sleep. The lull in the storm made it somewhat easier to steer, still Bately had his hands full. Below, Evans and Carter worked like maniacs to repair the break, the perspiration streaming from their faces, necks, and arms.

Rench lay awake in the cabin—awake, because the pain prevented him from sleeping, and because he was listening for what he confidently expected—sounds that would tell him the prisoners had outdone the sleepy and exhausted officers and were in control of the ship.

Halsey fought off slumber, and tried not to relax his guard on the five prisoners in the forecastle. Once or twice Benton looked in on him to see that everything was all right. The men did not go to sleep; each one of them expected one of the others to make some move to freedom, and each one wanted to be ready.

It was shortly after midnight that the ship's bell tolled again, though the hatch was closed, as it had been since the beginning of the storm. The girl was on deck when it happened, talking to Benton.

The captain looked at her when the bell tolled; but as she turned her head away, as though to avoid the question he was about to ask, he did not put it.

The men in the forecastle heard the toll.

"Blood and bones," the old man chanted. "I'm afraid!"

"Keep quiet!" Halsey commanded.

"I'm afraid! I'm afraid! Blood and bones!"

The old man started to get out of his bunk. His eyes were wild, and there was a look of terror on his face. He was just beginning to realize that he was back aboard the Calexico, in the midst of the mysterious horrors which had unnerved the crew.

"Get back in your bunk!" Halsey ordered.

The old man did not seem to hear. He sprang out and started across the forecastle toward the door. The second mate covered him with the revolver. At the same time he spoke to one of the other prisoners.

"Get out—you—and put the old man back in his bunk. He's so crazy, he doesn't know I'm pointing a revolver at him. I don't want to shoot a man that isn't responsible for what he's doing."

The man addressed sprang from his bunk and reached the old man's side just as the latter stood before Halsey.

"Get back, old man!" the sailor cried.

He picked him up and started to carry him back. Half-way across the forecastle he stopped and looked back.

"Put him in his bunk, sir?" he asked.

"Why, certainly," said Halsey. "That's what I told you to do."

"But he won't stay there."

"Put him in his bunk," Halsey ordered, "and see that he stays there."

"But—"

"Silence!" the mate commanded.

He realized at last that the man was playing with him and waiting for an opening. The sailor turned from him and put the old man in the bunk as ordered. Then he sat down on the edge, to keep him there.

"Blood and bones!" the old man chanted.

"Aw, shut up!" growled the sailor.

He was watching Halsey narrowly. The boy felt those keen eyes upon him—felt in the position of an animal-trainer who awaits the spring of an unmanageable beast. He expected the break at any minute.

Outside, the ship's bell tolled again. Halsey heard a step near the door and glanced around quickly. With a bound, the sailor on the edge of the old man's bunk was at him, and the others started to get from their bunks.

Halsey's head turned back quickly, his revolver spoke, and through the smoke he saw the sailor totter and fall to the floor, clutching at one leg just above the knee. The others recoiled.

"You have disobeyed orders," said a calm voice behind Halsey.

The girl stood beside him.

"Disobeyed orders?" he echoed.

"Yes," she replied, "for the captain said to shoot to kill!"

## CHAPTER XV.

### A WOMAN IN COMMAND.

BREAK of day found the situation aboard the Calexico unchanged, except that her officers were at the point of complete exhaustion.

The girl got some sleep during the night. Benton obtained a few winks at great hazard. Bately remained at the wheel, but he had lashed himself to keep from dropping, and his hands grasped the spokes mechanically. Halsey guarded the prisoners still, but fought himself to keep alert.

At daybreak Benton went down to see Rench. The big mate was in much pain, and the captain did not try to get him to talk. He proceeded to the engine-room next, and found that the repairs were done, and on the floor, their faces and hands covered with grease and grime, lay Evans and Carter, fast asleep. Their positions revealed to Benton the fact that they had dropped the moment the repairs were finished and their duty thus accomplished. He did not arouse them, but left them there and returned to the deck.

The girl prepared coffee again, and carried it to them all. Halsey was the last, and as he drank it she sat beside him, whispering so that the men could not hear.

"The repairs are done, but the engineer and his assistant are asleep. Mr. Rench is worse. The man at the wheel can scarcely keep his eyes open. Indications are that the storm is coming back, and that the return blow will be here before noon," she reported.

Halsey shook his head.

"The cap'n will never win," he said. "He's only got a little more than two days, and he doesn't even know our position. We are away out of our course, or we shouldn't have met the Birmingham. And with every one dead for sleep and these prisoners to guard, it's going to be hard to get along."

"He'll win!" the girl replied. "Why, he *has* to win! If we can only get the engines started — I can take the wheel and you can guard the prisoners a little longer while the captain gets some sleep and afterward relieves you."

"I'll do my best," he said. "I want the cap'n to win, and I want him to think I can do my duty. I've simply got to have a steady job."

"Blood and bones!" chanted the old man suddenly, sitting up in his bunk.

"If you don't keep quiet, you'll not get any coffee," said the girl.

The old man looked at her foolishly and ceased his mouthings. She laughed and went away, but was back soon with coffee for all of them, and she gave the old man his share first of all. Afterward she went back to the deck.

"Captain Benton," she said, "one of the men in the forecastle has a bullet-wound in his leg, where Halsey shot him in the night because he tried to make a break. I'd like to examine it, and give him some attention."

"Certainly, if you care to," Benton replied. "A wounded man must have assistance, no matter who he is."

"And one other thing," she continued. "Mr. Halsey has been without sleep, the same as the rest of you, but he has been forced to keep widely alert; and while you have been out here in the fresh, open air, he has been in the forecastle, where the air is foul."

"I know," said Benton. "I'm sorry for the boy."

"After I see to the wounded man, can't I guard the prisoners while he takes a turn on deck?"

"You?" he cried.

"Certainly, captain. I can shoot as straight and as quickly as any man on board."

"But—"

"You need fear nothing. I'll not hesitate if one of them makes a move."

"I don't like to—" Benton hesitated.

"Don't you trust me yet?" she asked.

"It isn't that I do not trust you," he said quickly. "But I don't like to leave a woman there to guard five desperate men. They may try a break—may try all sorts of tricks, you know—may even insult you, hoping that in your anger you will lose your presence of mind and give them a chance."

The girl's eyes flashed.

"I am not afraid," she retorted. "And no matter what they do or say, I shall remember that I am to guard them carefully, and nothing else."

"I don't know—"

"And a quarter of an hour in the fresh air would do wonders for him," she went on. "He ought to have that much recreation before the storm comes on again."

Benton thought a moment.

"I'll risk it, if you are willing," he said finally. "But one of us will be near in case anything happens."

She thanked him, and ran to the cabin for bandages. In a few minutes she was in the forecastle again, and was examining the wound in the sailor's leg.

It was not a serious one, for the bullet had left a clean hole in its passage through the limb. She dressed it as well as she could, and the man thanked her awkwardly.

Then she told Halsey the plan, but the mate refused.

"It is too dangerous," he whispered.

"I'll not hesitate to shoot," she replied. "They'll never get past the door alive—any of them."

"I wasn't thinking of that danger," he said. "I was thinking of the danger to you. I—I wouldn't want to have you injured or insulted."

"Why?" she asked bluntly.

"Because I—I like you," Halsey stammered, his face flushing.

She bent toward him swiftly, and whispered her reply so low that none could hear.

"And I like you," she said softly. "Will you go now? It's the captain's orders."

He got up from the box on which he had been sitting and gave her the revolver.

"This young lady," he announced, turning upon the prisoners, "will guard you a few minutes while I go on deck. She can shoot, and will shoot if you try any tricks. And when I return, if she informs me that any one of you has said or done anything out of the way, I'll give that man all the punishment he deserves."

Not one of them said a word as Halsey gave them a final look and went out.

The girl seated herself on the box in the doorway, where Halsey had been sitting. For several minutes she looked at the men, watching carefully and saying nothing. But she was listening to see whether Halsey had paused just outside. She had something to say, but she didn't want Halsey or Benton to hear.

When she was satisfied that neither of the officers was listening, she spoke.

"I'm ashamed of you," she began. "I can't see how a strong man would be so frightened that he would mutiny and desert a ship. I don't want one of you to say a word—but listen to me.

"All the things you have seen and heard are not mysterious. A firm that is the rival of the firm which owns this ship wants to keep the Calexico from reaching San Diego by a certain time, so her owners will lose a contract. They arranged to play tricks on you, thinking you were so superstitious that you'd be frightened like a lot of children and desert, leaving the ship without a crew. You were babies enough to do it."

There was fine scorn in her voice as she continued:

"The tolling-bell, the skulls, the shrieks and pistol-shots, and all the mysteries are easily explained, and will be explained when we reach port. Then you'll realize how foolish you were, and feel ashamed. You'll be angry to think that a trick played by a human being no

more mysterious than any one of you caused you to forget discipline and do things you shouldn't, and put you in danger of going to prison.

"Captain Benton is a good, clean man, and he's fighting for more than you know. He's clean enough to forgive you, if you deserve it. I don't think he'll turn you over to the officers of the law anyway, especially if he is successful. If he wins on this trip, he wins a great deal —more than you can understand. And by your cowardly actions you have placed him in a position where it will be hard for him to win."

"Th' rats left th' ship!" cried the old man, a gleam of reason in his eyes.

"That was a trick, too," she said. "All of it is a trick. You've been fooled like a lot of babies. And because you allowed yourselves to be fooled, you are liable to go to prison."

"It looked pretty bad," one of the men said sheepishly.

"But it was all a trick. Listen now, for the second mate will be coming back soon. I was helping play those tricks, and I know all about them. I've been as good to you as I could be, in spite of the fact that you didn't deserve it. Why don't you show your repentance by taking hold and helping get the ship to San Diego on time?"

"Did the cap'n tell you to come here and say that?" one of the men asked.

"He did not! He does not know I am talking to you like this."

"He wouldn't stand for it, miss—for us workin' th' ship!"

"Perhaps I could arrange it," she said.

"But he'd hand us over, just th' same."

"Listen," she commanded. "If I let you leave the forecastle now, before the mate comes back, will you work the ship? If you do, I'll promise you this. I'll be your commander, and you'll have nothing to do with Captain Benton. I'll hold this revolver, and I'll watch you. At the first bad move, one of you will die, and just as many of you will die as make bad moves. If you do your work honestly, I'll plead with the captain to let you off, and if he doesn't do it, he's not the man I think him, and I'll help you to get away myself."

"If we could believe that—" began one of them.

Her eyes flashed, and she got up from the box and took a few steps toward him, still watching the others.

"I am a woman," she said, "but no man can say that I lie!"

"I beg your pardon," the man stammered.

"Well, what about my plan?"

"If you'll be our cap'n, and do all you promise—"

"I'll be your captain, and do all I promise."

"Then I'll do it," said one.

"And I'll do it, too."

"So'll I."

The old man muttered something, and the wounded man said he wasn't able to walk well enough to do much.

"Then we'll go on deck now," she said. "Remember, I mean business. Do your part, and I'll see that you get off. Make a bad move, and I'll shoot to kill. Come—the four of you. Follow me at a little distance."

They sprang from their bunks and followed her, the old man last. She walked ahead, watching them, holding the revolver ready for instant action.

Benton and Halsey sprang forward with cries of fear when they reached the deck. The girl silenced them before she spoke.

"Captain Benton," she said, "I have explained to these men that the things they feared were tricks played by the enemies of the firm for which you work. They are ashamed. I asked them if they would work the ship and help you get to port and win, under certain conditions, and they agreed."

"But—" began Benton.

He gazed at the men, standing in a row before him, their caps in their hands, shamed looks on their faces.

"Wait," said the girl. "They are to do everything in their power to get the ship to San Diego on time. I told them this—that I would act as their commander, and that they would take orders from none but me. If they obey as they should, I am to ask you to let them off from the charge of mutiny. If you do not, you are not the sort of man I think you are, and I'll help them to go free myself. If they make the least bad break,

I am to shoot to kill—and I'll do it. That is the situation."

Benton did not reply. He was uncertain how to take her. She had been in the employ of Phelps—and was this a trick?

She seemed to divine his thoughts, and stepping swiftly to his side, yet with her eyes watching the prisoners, she whispered to him:

"You are not trusting me, Captain Benton. And you may—really. I am doing this to atone—and to help the girl! You can never get to port on time unless this plan is followed—for you can't work the ship when you and your officers are exhausted. There will be no danger, for the engineer and his assistant can watch the stokers, the old man is harmless, and I'll watch the man at the wheel."

Benton looked into her eyes for a moment, then stepped toward the men.

"What this young lady says, goes," he declared. "If you act as you should from this time on, I'll forget there was any trouble or any mutiny, and you'll not be prosecuted. But if you make a bad move, she'll shoot to kill, and all that are not killed will go to prison for the limit of sentence. The young lady commands the ship; you are to obey her!"

He stepped back. The men cheered. The old man, tottering toward the rail, began his chant again:

"I'm afraid; blood and bones!"

One of the men went over to him, whirled him around, and exclaimed:

"Shut up, or I'll wring your neck! Your blamed foolishness did as much as anything to make fools of us! Shut up now! Do you hear?"

The old man whimpered, and tottered away. The girl turned to Benton and held a short conversation with him. The captain went to the engine-room, awakened Evans and Carter, and explained the situation to them. Then he returned to the deck.

The girl pointed out two of the men.

"Go below and report to the engineer," she commanded.

"Aye, aye, cap'n," said one, laughing; and they hurried below.

"Take the wheel," she ordered another.

The man went aft and relieved Bately, who stumbled to the rail, and stood there with half-closed eyes watching the scene.

The old man was left, and the girl sent him to the forecastle. Then she turned to Bately.

"Get some sleep," she ordered. "You rest, too, Mr. Halsey. You'll both be needed before long."

Soon she and Benton were all that remained on deck, except the man at the wheel. Benton had made a guess at their position, had mapped out a rough course. Soon black smoke began pouring from the stacks; and after a time the propeller churned the water and the Calexico pushed her nose through the heavy seas, slowly at first, because the engineer and his assistant were testing their repairs, then faster and faster, gathering headway, until finally the regular speed was being maintained.

It was the hour of noon.

They had forty-eight hours in which to put the Calexico alongside the wharf at San Diego. Benton's hopes rose. The situation was much improved over what it had been—thanks to the girl—but victory was not yet in sight, even if the crew behaved.

For he was out of his course, running with machinery temporarily repaired; and the sea was getting heavier, for the storm was returning upon them, with its gigantic force, perhaps to tear the heart out of the engines and disable the craft.

And down below was the mystery that was still unexplained, the mystery that carried with it the possibility that new tricks would be used to put terror into the hearts of the men at a critical moment and defeat all plans.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE STORM RETURNS.

MID-AFTERNOON found the Calexico in the grip of the storm. In the engine-room the two stokers worked with a will, while Evans and Carter watched every bit of machinery carefully, fearful of another disaster.

In the cabin Rench lay and cursed, while Halsey slept soundly. In the forecastle the wounded man tossed in his bunk, and the old maniac tottered about, trying to keep his feet, muttering to himself.

The man at the wheel, lashed there by

the girl's order, held the schooner on her course. Benton walked the deck, watching the girl, fearing a heavy wave would catch her unawares.

She seemed born to the sea. In her first hour there she had demonstrated to Benton that she knew something of seamanship. Now she ran here and there like some wild thing, glorying in the storm, watching the masses of foam, the dashing spray, seeking shelter when gigantic seas boarded the vessel.

It was no time for words; the wind made conversation impossible. But now and then Benton waved his hand at her, indicating that everything was all right and that the Calexico still battled successfully with the elements.

Darkness came early. With the girl's help, Benton managed to get his lights going. The lightning flashed on every side of them; thunder rolled above the thunder of the sea. It was the worst storm in years, Benton knew.

The last bit of rail had crashed overboard. The rigging was little better than a tangled mass of junk. Ventilators had been twisted out of shape. And every sea that swept the craft from bow to stern did fresh damage.

The ship was making fearful speed, flying before the wind, driven blindly by the raging storm. Every pound of power that Evans dared thrust upon his weakened machinery drove the vessel's propeller. Good time—yes! But Benton did not know to where. Their general direction was all right, he knew; but they might be riding to serious disaster, instead of a port of safety.

It was necessary to have a lookout. Without consulting the girl, Benton went below and awakened Halsey, who had gained considerable rest. He sent him to the bow.

There, in as good shelter as he could get, Halsey crouched, his eyes watching the foaming waters. It was a perilous position, and there was but little chance of the boy seeing disaster in time to avoid it, but even the little chance counted.

Heavy seas drenched him, but he lashed himself to the rigging and fought to retain his position. He knew the peril as well as any of them.

Now and then he turned to look aft to see that the man who stood at the wheel was all right, that Benton still paced the deck, that the girl kept her feet. And thus the night wore away.

When daybreak came, the storm was as bad as in the early part of the night. Benton ordered the girl below.

"You must have rest," he said. "Everything is all right now. Go to the cabin, and let us handle the ship."

"The men below must be tired," she objected.

"Order Bately to relieve one of them."

"But the man at the wheel," she said.

"He cannot be relieved just now. We'll find some way. You'd better go below for a time and rest."

She smiled at him and went, but it was not to rest. For in half an hour she was on deck again, bringing hot coffee to the men. She carried some to the engine-room, some to the forecastle. Then she went forward with Halsey's share.

She always went to Halsey last, perhaps because she liked to talk to him while he ate and drank. She did so now, crouched beside him out of the wind and spray.

Bately had been sent below, and one tired stoker had left his coffee to go to the forecastle to sleep. The man at the wheel remained there, though his arms were almost numb and he shivered from the cold water.

After Halsey had eaten, she arose to return to the galley. She would try to get them something more substantial, she said. Halsey watched as she started away. The bow of the ship dipped suddenly, and the water rushed aboard. The boy cried a warning as he turned from the force of the torrent.

Even as it passed he was working furiously at the lashings, to get free. And when at last he was at liberty, and dashed the water from his eyes, he saw her—a huddled heap—against the forward hatch.

He ran to her. Her eyes were closed, and she seemed unconscious. Benton ran toward her, too.

"She's insensible," Halsey said.

"Let me carry her below—quick!" Benton cried.

"I'll carry her, cap'n!" said Halsey firmly.

He picked her up in his arms and

staggered across the deck, Benton helping to keep him from falling. But before Halsey reached the cabin with her, she opened her eyes and smiled up at him, and he put her down upon her feet, but still held her in his arms.

"I'm not—hurt," she told him.

"I was afraid," he said.

"Afraid I was hurt?"

"Yes."

"Why?" she asked. "Would you have cared?"

Halsey hesitated.

"Yes," he said finally.

"You—you love me—boy?"

"Yes."

Her arms slipped up and clasped around his neck.

"I'm glad," she said.

"Why? Do you love me?"

"Yes—boy."

"You've only known me for—"

She pressed her hand against his lips.

"Time doesn't make any difference, boy, when a person loves; especially if the person is a woman," she said. "Aren't you going to kiss me?"

He kissed her—not once, but a score of times, holding her closely in his arms, pressing her to him.

"It's nice to have some one love you, boy," she said.

He let her go suddenly.

"But I must get back on deck," he exclaimed. "You go to the cabin—I'll help you—and rest."

With one arm about her, he led her on, threw open the cabin-door, and entered. Rench looked up quickly.

"You got it, too?" he asked.

"I'm not hurt," she answered. "The water caught me—knocked the breath out of my body. I'll be all right in a few minutes."

"You're a game un," the big mate replied.

Then he groaned, because his side gave him a twinge of sharp pain.

"You'd better lie down for a time," Halsey said.

He helped her to the bunk, and she lay down and looked up at him.

"I must get back on deck," he said, his face flushing.

"All right, boy."

"You'd better stay here until you're sure you're all right."

"Don't worry; I'll be all right."

"Good-by, then."

He started to leave the cabin.

"Boy!" she called.

"Yes."

"Aren't you going to kiss me before you go?"

Halsey's face reddened, and Rench turned quickly, in spite of the pain, to look at him.

"Ha!" he cried.

But Halsey walked past him with his head held high, knelt beside the bunk, and kissed her. Then he arose to go.

"Boy!" she called again.

"Yes."

"You don't even — even know — my name," she said.

"Well?"

"It is Myrtle—"

"Myrtle what?"

"I'll tell the rest some other time, boy. Isn't Myrtle enough?"

"Yes," he said simply.

"And, boy?"

"Yes."

"I — I don't know yours — not the first one."

"Mine is Walter."

"I just wanted to know," she said. "It doesn't make any difference about names, for I love you. And I'll call you 'boy' anyway."

"Good-by," he said again, and reached the door.

"Boy!" called Rench loudly.

Halsey turned toward him angrily, but desisted from an outburst when he saw the twinkling light in the big mate's eyes.

"Boy," said Rench, "when you get back on deck you want to get busy and make a hit with the cap'n. 'Cause, if you're goin' to marry this young lady—and I infer as much from th' demonstration I've just seen—you'll simply have to have a job!"

And with that parting shot ringing in his ears, Halsey hurried back to the deck.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### A NEW DISCOVERY.

NOON!

Twenty-four hours more, and the Calexico would have to be alongside the

wharf at San Diego, else Captain Benton lost.

Twenty-four hours only, and the Calexico was running wild before the force of a terrific storm; her skipper did not know his location—knew only that the general direction he followed was correct; and there was danger of broken machinery again, or of wreck by crashing upon rocks hidden by the foamy waters.

The outlook was indeed a dark one for Benton, who paced the deck hoping against hope, his teeth set tightly, his hands clenched in agony at his sides. The storm had carried the ship out of her track. Would the return of the storm carry her back again?

At noon the stoker who had been resting was sent below to work with Bately and relieve the other man, who immediately turned in. Halsey was called from his position as lookout to take the wheel and relieve the man there. That man went to the forecastle, too, and was soon sleeping.

The wounded man and the harmless maniac were awake, the former groaning because of the pain in his leg, the latter muttering ceaselessly.

Evans and Carter were working at shifts below, urging each other on. Throughout the ship was a spirit of endeavor; it had been fostered by the girl, but its real cause was the true worth of Captain Benton, for all knew his story now, and knew him for a clean, honest man, and wanted him to win.

The girl had gone forward and taken the post of lookout when Halsey took the wheel. Lashed under the best shelter she could find, she gazed ahead through the clouds of spray, watching the great billows that rolled upon the ship as though to crush it, only to dash into foam and go under the bow as she was driven onward by the engines and the storm.

The elements and man's ingenuity combined to give the Calexico speed.

A few more hours of daylight, another night of lightning and thunder and heavy seas, daybreak, a few hours more, and then the battle would be either won or lost.

And the majority of those aboard the Calexico thought it as good as lost.

It was in mid-afternoon, in the midst of the worst of the storm, that the ship's bell began tolling again. Shrieks came from below the closed hatch, and once a pistol-shot sounded. The old man in the forecastle heard, and before any one could prevent him, he tottered to the deck. Benton saw him.

"Go back; you'll be swept away!" the captain cried. "It's bad enough out here for a man that has his whole assortment of brains. Get back to the forecastle!"

The old man did not seem to hear; indeed, the captain's words did not reach him, perhaps, because of the treacherous wind.

"Blood and bones!" he screamed; and they heard his cry above the roar of the storm. "Blood and bones! I'm afraid! Th' rats are leavin' th' ship!"

Benton reached his side, and put out a hand to touch him. At his touch the old man sprang backward with a cry of fear on his lips.

"Blood and bones! I'm afraid!"

He ran from Benton, along the pitching deck, now upon his feet safely, now upon his knees as the ship rolled. He ran aft, stood for a moment looking at Halsey at the wheel.

"Go back!" Halsey cried.

The old man uttered another cry of fear, and sprang upon the boy. The harmless maniac had become, in a moment, a dangerous one.

Halsey was lashed, and could not get free to defend himself. He gripped the wheel with one hand, and tried to fight with the other. The force of the storm jerked the wheel from his grasp and spun it. The Calexico, caught like a cork between cross-currents, swung to her beam-ends.

But in the next instant the craft righted herself, and Halsey grasped the wheel again. Benton was on the scene now, subduing the old man.

"Hurt?" he cried to Halsey.

"No, sir!"

"Keep her as she is."

"Aye, aye, sir."

But the old man was not subdued so easily. As Benton started to pilot him to the forecastle, he wheeled suddenly and attacked the captain.

Benton fought with him madly. In

his insanity the old man seemed to have unnatural strength. Back and forth across the deck they reeled, the victory a question.

The lurching of the ship had frightened the two able-bodied men in the forecastle, and they hurried to the deck. The girl screamed to them to go to the captain's aid. They ran down the deck and soon had the old man between them, half-dragging him to the forecastle.

As they passed the forward hatch the ship's bell tolled again. The men stared at it.

"Blood and bones!" the maniac cried.

But the men did not hesitate. They carried him on across the deck, watching lest a heavy sea board the ship and catch them unawares. The girl watched them, and smiled.

Half an hour later, Carter hurried to the deck.

"We'll have to have another man below, sir," he said to Benton. "Bately is done for."

"What's the matter with Bately?"

"The heat, I guess, and the hard work. He's been living easy for some time prior to this voyage, you know. He's collapsed."

"I'll send you a man," Benton said.

He went to the forecastle and despatched the man who had had the most rest.

Just before the darkness came the girl went to the galley again and cooked some food, which she carried to the men. Then she went back to her position as lookout. There Captain Benton found her later.

"You ought to go below and rest for a time," he said.

"But some one should be here," she protested.

"It doesn't do much good now; it is too dark. We must trust to luck and run blindly."

She unlashed herself and started back with him. Half-way down the deck a sea caught them, and they clasped each other to keep from going over the side. When the sea had passed they found themselves near the forward hatch.

Just then the ship's bell tolled again.

"There are just two things I wish, besides wanting to win this trip," said Benton. "One is that the confounded tolling of that bell would stop, and the other is that I had one more man. I'd be all right if Rench was able, or the man Halsey shot, or if the old chap hadn't gone crazy."

"I'm sorry," the girl said.

"Do you suppose you could stop that tolling?" he asked.

She turned away from him a moment, but looked back soon, straight into his eyes.

*(To be continued.)*

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# A TAXICAB TERROR.

By GARRET SMITH.

**How a bluffer was caught napping and the direful consequences of his struggles to awake.**

THEY walked right into that store, turned around, and walked right out again—into the wrong taxicab. And that brief moment of absent-mindedness imperiled Jack Harland's whole future.

Doesn't seem tragic at first sight, does it? But listen to this little tale of wo.

Young Harland, fledgling lawyer of the hall-room type, making a frantic bluff at prosperity, was escorting Genevieve Valentine, real heiress and goal of his ambition. She had been starting on a shopping tour when he called that day. She asked him to go along. Mama was using the carriage, so with forebodings of dire evil Jack had called a taxicab.

He had barely enough money for the proposed trip—if he had good luck.

They left the cab for a moment at Holcomb's while Genevieve spent her remaining cash on a necklace. And the cab they accidentally misappropriated on departing had been waiting for another person who had already registered

on its dial a fare far beyond Jack's resources.

Therefore and hence, our hero was in for bunches of trouble. He must confess either his stupid blunder or his real impecuniousness or both. It was trouble, anyhow.

And this just as he was getting on swimmingly with Genevieve, despite the decided objections of hard-headed Papa Valentine, who had spent forty years making a study of bluffs.

Jack nervously fidgeted on the cab seat. In vain he tried to listen to Genevieve's discourse on settlement work, her pet hobby and his pet aversion. His eyes were fixed in hypnotic stare on the brazen-faced cab dial that was making things worse at every click.

"Seven dollars!" it glared.

Jack's right hand involuntarily thrust itself into his pocket, and in mute, ingrowing despair he closed it over an exclusive two-dollar bill and an isolated fifty-cent piece, his total loose and available capital at that moment.

"And how to get at these people?" babbled Miss Valentine innocently. "How to make them realize their need, that is the greatest problem."

"Problem!" scoffed the wretched inner man of Harland. "Subtract seven dollars from two dollars and fifty cents without injuring the biceps—that's what I call a problem, a real old grandfather of a problem, with long gray whiskers."

Meanwhile, every turn of the wheels was hurrying the indicator on toward another dollar-mark.

They had ridden several blocks from the fatal stopping-place before Jack had made the awful discovery that his fare had run away with him. His first thought was that the taximeter had lied brazenly, his second an inner warning not to give himself away at any rate.

This might be some trick of cabs he was supposed to know about. He mustn't display ignorance of such usages.

He craned around and peered, through the starboard stern port-hole of the cab, at the face of the chauffeur with the vague idea of finding therein comfort and light. He found light.

The chauffeur, when Harland engaged that cab, had a flourishing Kaiser Wilhelm mustache. The face Jack now saw above the jehu's throne was innocent of hirsute adornment.

Either that manipulator of levers had been passing away the time while running up the avenue by shaving himself, or — that was it, of course — Harland, preoccupied by his pretty companion, had entered the wrong one of several waiting cabs. The chauffeur had been visiting with a neighbor and failed to notice his change of passengers.

Jack suddenly realized that Miss Valentine had observed his preoccupation and had stopped in the middle of a thrilling account of how a family of twelve occupied two hall bedroom-like rooms in a Houston Street tenement.

Jack apologized. He had simply noticed a friend passing on the sidewalk.

Apology accepted.

Then he fell to wondering if they ever had to pay for seven-dollar Houston Street tenements out of a two-dollar bill and a worn fifty-cent piece.

Here was a compound bunch of nice ripe dilemmas right off the dilemmon-tree!

Could he refuse to pay? He might pretend the taximeter had gone wrong. The chauffeur would, no doubt, have him arrested and prove that he had ridden seven dollars worth. On the other hand, he must never admit to Miss Valentine that he had been dolt enough to put her in the wrong cab.

If he went any farther, his impossible bill would only grow larger. If he went back, it would grow, anyhow. Besides, he might not find their original cab. If he did find the right cab, he must pay for their abortive ride in the present one, besides the other fare. That, too, would mount over his two dollars and fifty cents.

Meanwhile, Miss Valentine philosophized on how hard it was for a young East Side laborer to make both ends meet.

"You can't form any conception of it, Mr. Harland!" she sighed sympathetically.

Couldn't he, though?

But hang the settlement work! He must get rid of Miss Valentine at once. Then he could adopt almost any expedient to free himself of the chauffeur.

Here was a scheme. He would have

the cab wait at the lady's home. After a few minutes in which to complete a formal call he would depart unhampered to deal with his machine jehu.

As they swung up to the curb, his companion had reached the subject of tenement roof-gardens.

"Oh, Mr. Harland!" she gurgled, "I must show you some views I have of experiments along this line. You aren't in any hurry, are you?"

Two bewitching brown eyes were sparkling at him. But even as he assured her how happy he'd be to spend hours looking at those views and was arranging his face in lines meaning joy, there came the thought that he must get back to that store at once while there was still a chance to shift that seven dollars to the right shoulders.

Thoughtfully he helped Miss Valentine to alight. The chauffeur seemed unconscious of any change in passengers. Maybe the other pair wore a Merry Widow and a Panama, too.

"Eight dollars!" glared the taximeter.

Reluctantly Jack thrust his hand into his pocket for the fare, reading the amount on the dial face with an attempt at unconcern.

He withdrew the hand again, empty.

"Well," he answered Genevieve's look of inquiry, with a burst of inspiration, "guess somebody in Holcomb's lifted my wallet. I know it was there just before we went into the store. If you'll excuse me, Miss Valentine, I'll run back and see the store-detective.

"I've other money with me," he hastened on desperately, noting a look of suspicion on the face of the chauffeur, "but that was a pretty good-sized sum, and I'd like to punish the chap who got it."

"Isn't that a shame!" sympathized Genevieve. "Be sure you let me know whether you find it. And I'm really to blame for asking a man on a stupid shopping trip. Why, if you don't mind," she added, seized by a sudden whim, "I'll ride back with you. It's so pleasant out to-day, and, besides, I want to know how you come out."

How could he mind?

Anyhow, Miss Valentine was back in the cab. In dumb misery he followed.

So they returned to Holcomb's. Alas! none of the waiting line of chauffeurs in front of the big jewelry emporium had Kaiser Wilhelm mustaches. Harland had to make good his latest bluff and go through the motions of telling the store-detective of his alleged loss.

If he could only slip out of a side exit and never come back! Even an attack of heart-failure would be welcome.

But he returned to the cab with heart heavy, if not conveniently failing, and a would-be smiling face. What next?

"Well, no pickpocket has been caught yet," he jauntily remarked to his companion. "How'd you like to take a spin around the Park?" he hurried on.

He must stave it off as long as possible. Perhaps something would turn up.

Genevieve agreed to the Park scheme gleefully.

As they turned about there came another bright idea. He'd call up his office down-town. It was getting late in the afternoon, but there might be some one there yet from whom he could raise a loan. Then he'd drop Miss Valentine and run down to the Warren Street place. There he could get the wherewithal to rid himself of this electric old man of the sea.

"I declare!" he exclaimed. "Can I try your patience a little more, Miss Valentine? I promised to call a man on the phone at four-thirty. The charming society I am enjoying almost made me forget it."

"Thank you, Sir Hubert!" mocked the dimpling lady; "for that speech you are pardoned."

Jack stopped at the nearest pay-station. He began telephoning frantically. Every man in the building either was dead-broke or gone for the day.

Then he thought of the only other person in the city on whom he could call for help, a real-estate agent in Forty-Second Street. He got the man's number and found him in.

"Sure thing, old man!" came the welcome answer when Jack had stated his need. "Can have all you want, if you can get here in five minutes. I must catch that five-fifteen for Yonkers."

Harland dashed for his cab, gave the chauffeur the number, and "a dollar extra if you make it in five minutes."

"One more apology, Miss Valentine," he added. "I find I must get an important paper from a man around the corner."

Into Forty-Second Street from Fifth Avenue they skidded, just missing the wheel of another motor. The traffic officer hailed them. The chauffeur stopped dead still.

Jack was too excited to weigh consequences.

"Hit it up!" he shouted in the very face of the policeman. "Don't let him stop you. We're only a block away. Get me there, and he can arrest us if he wants to."

But the chauffeur remembered past performances with fractured traffic rules.

"What d'ye mean cuttin' that corner at fifty miles an hour?" exaggerated the outraged legal limb. "An' ye turned the wrong way, too."

"I was acting under orders," sullenly evaded the chauffeur.

"Yes, I heard this man." The officer turned to Harland. "You tould him to give me the slip, didn't ye? I arrest ye both."

So they headed for the station, Harland in speechless despair.

"I've never been arrested before," wailed Genevieve. "What will my father say? He mustn't know."

"Nine dollars!" glared the taximeter.

At the station, the chauffeur was charged with speeding and Harland with resisting an officer. Bail was fixed at one hundred dollars each.

Bail! That was a good joke.

He must get Miss Valentine started home before he had to admit the damning fact that he hadn't with him in cash, watch, or jewelry, all told, the one hundred dollars necessary for his own bail, to say nothing of that for the chauffeur.

Every gentleman stands ready to bail his chauffeur.

But his plea for permission to see the lady home fell on deaf ears. It was heartlessly suggested that he could pay the chauffeur and direct him to take her home.

That silenced Jack. Pay the chauffeur, indeed!

At that moment another taxicab hove in sight, and stopped in front of the station. The chauffeur alighted and entered. He was angry and excited. Nevertheless, at sight of him Jack nearly shouted for joy.

The man wore a pronounced Kaiser Wilhelm mustache. He was their original chauffeur.

The prisoner's glee was short-lived, however.

"Captain, yer honor," broke in the newcomer in an accent not Kaiser Wilhelm by several smacks of the blarney-stone. "On me way home I sthop to complain av a couple batin' the cabmin, an' I suspect"—here he caught sight of Harland—"an' there he is now, yer honor. Praise be, ye've arrested him! An' where's the gurrl?"

The captain broke into this puzzling monologue, and with a few questions learned that the chauffeur had taken on Harland and the "gurrl" in Fifty-Seventh Street and waited for them to visit Holcomb's. After an hour he decided that they had given him the slip.

He had asked the store-detective if he had seen any one of their description, and that official had told him such a man had just complained of having his pockets picked, and had acted in a strange, embarrassed manner. Hence the chauffeur had deduced the ingenious theory that Miss Valentine and Harland were professional pickpockets and cab-beaters.

Then broke in the other chauffeur:

"Beat ye, did he? Why, he owes me nine dollars and something. I belave he tried to do me same as he did you. He was workin' us both."

Then the second chauffeur told the captain of Harland's strange racing around in the last hour. As he progressed, the conflict between his story and that of the first man became more and more puzzling.

"I'm afraid we'll have to arrest the lady, too, and investigate," finally decided the officer. "This young man was too anxious to get her away from here. Call the matron and have her searched."

Harland's blood assumed a frappéd condition.

Miss Valentine had passed the tearful stage and was in a fighting humor. She refused to give her name, and declared stoutly that she would go to Blackwell's Island for six months before she would

call on any of her acquaintances for bail, or let them know of her disgraceful situation. She refused even to look at the limp and helpless Harland.

Every moment things grew more embarrassing. Miss Valentine's well-bred defiance had baffled the efforts of the officers to take her pedigree. And now a heavy-faced matron was leading her away to the crowning humiliation of being searched.

Several other prisoners, specimens of street scum, stood about in charge of officers, awaiting their turn and eying the well-dressed couple with loathsome curiosity.

At that moment a ferret-visaged young man pushed through the circle, emitting a volley of eager and pointed questions. The captain showed him the blotter, and Jack saw the inquisitor make some notes on the back of an old envelope. Then he turned to the prisoner with:

"How'd it happen, old man? This seems to be a bit of a mix-up. Why, Mr. Harland! Don't remember me, I suppose? I'm Bettis, of the *Evening Clarion*. Just a minute, captain; I know these people."

The young man began a low conversation with the police officer.

Then Jack remembered, and his heart sank several more notches. Bettis was a wide-awake young newspaper man who had wormed an important story out of him a year ago.

This was, indeed, the climax! The story of his escapade with the wealthy Miss Valentine would be in all the papers, with a lot of extra frills that could redound neither to the comfort of the lady nor to his credit.

Now the reporter was hurrying out. To pick up the other ends of the story, thought Harland bitterly.

The next moment, to Jack's surprise, the captain himself led him into a side-room, where they were joined a moment later by Miss Valentine, still defiant.

"We'll look into this a bit further," remarked the officer, and withdrew, leaving them alone, except for a policeman who stood guard outside the door.

Jack endured the strain of Genevieve's accusing silence for about a moment, then broke down and made a sweeping and humble confession.

He knew he was at the end of his rope, anyhow. He exposed in true colors his present and past life of bluff. He wound up with an abject apology and a promise that, once out of jail, he would thrash every reporter in the city who wrote a line about the escapade.

"Of course, I understand that this ends our friendship, and that I have earned your heartiest contempt."

The girl did not contradict him.

At this moment the reporter and the police captain returned.

"See here, Mr. Harland," began the scribe, "you did me a good turn when you put me next to that Portland story a year ago. It cinched my job, and I've been on Easy Street ever since. Now, I've got a chance to help you out. I know who this lady is. Seen her picture in the society columns. I've doped this story out pretty straight from what the captain and the others tell me, and it would make a good one. But it stops right here under my hat.

"I've steered the rest of the gang off. There won't be a line printed. Even we yellow fellows aren't yellow all through. We know a good turn when we see it. I've persuaded the cap that he ain't got anything against the lady, and I've fixed up bail for you and the chauffeur. Just show up in the night court, and I think I can put a flea in the magistrate's ear. Here's a little coin to settle the cab bills with. Pay me next week or whenever handy. So long!"

Before the surprised pair could thank him he had slipped out.

In a dazed way Jack showed Miss Valentine to the cab, and started to shut the door, as he bitterly reflected, closing her out of his life forever.

"Please see me home, Mr. Harland," commanded the young lady in chill tones.

That woke him up, and he climbed into the cab. Evidently he was not to escape without a little moral homily.

They were in front of her house before Genevieve spoke. Then there was implied in her manner and voice an attitude toward him which filled his humbled soul with perplexity.

The expected anger and scorn would have been less humiliating. This attitude somehow reminded him of the one

visit he had made with Genevieve to her pet settlement-house and her talk to the inmates.

"Mr. Harland," she said, "I am not going to scold you. I have worked among struggling young people so long that I realize your temptation. In fact, I admire your ambition to rise to a higher sphere, notwithstanding apparently insurmountable obstacles.

Jack thought his pride had reached the zero-mark before. He felt it drop several more notches now. And in the country where Jack was brought up, the Harland family pride had never been known to drop below the boiling-point, even if pride was the only heirloom that the family had been able to hand down to Jack.

He hung his head.

"But I don't approve your methods," went on Lady Bountiful in her most bountiful manner. "I think, though, that you have learned a lesson, and will never try again what papa calls the game of bluff. Now, I know you need help, and you are just the kind we are trying to reach. We have excellent lodging for deserving young men at the settlement, including reading-rooms and innocent games, and this card presented to the secretary will admit you as a visitor and put you on the ordinary waiting-list for a room."

Genevieve had taken a card from the bag, filled in his name in the blank, and indorsed it with her own.

"Good-by, Mr. Harland," she said. "I'll hope to see you at the Wednesday evening meetings at the settlement hereafter."

And with a grácious smile his "benefactress" withdrew.

It was fully five minutes before Harland looked up and realized that the chauffeur was silently and patiently waiting for his long-deferred and much-contested fare.

"Ten dollars!" glared forth the taximeter.

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## ELFIN SONG.

Ouphe and goblin, imp and sprite,
Elf of eve, and starry fay!
Ye that love the moon's soft light,
Hither—hither wend your way;
Twine ye in a jocund ring,
Sing and trip it merrily,
Hand to hand, and wing to wing,
Round the wild witch-hazel tree.

Hail the wanderer again,
With dance and song, with lute and lyre.
Pure his wing and strong his chain,
And doubly bright his fairy fire.
Twine ye in an airy round,
Brush the dew and print the lea;
Skip and gambol, hop and bound,
Round the wild witch-hazel tree.

The beetle guards our holy ground—
He flies about the haunted place,
And if mortal there be found
He hums in his ears and flaps his face;
The leaf-harp sounds our roundelay,
The owlet's eyes our lanterns be;
Thus we sing, and dance, and play
Round the wild witch-hazel tree.

*Joseph Rodman Drake.*

# AN ELUSIVE LEGACY.*

By HARLAN G. STEELE.

What happened when a photographer closed out his business to drop into a supposed bed of roses, and founrd a honet's nest of trouble instead.

## SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

A poor young photographer, Dick Behan, falls heir to the fortune of his uncle, John Behan, of Ravenswood, only to find that it is tied up in certain gold mines at Verdee, British Columbia. Upon the advice of his uncle's lawyer, Weatherby, Dick starts at once for Verdee to investigate. On the train he becomes acquainted, under the name of Behave, assumed in a spirit of frolic, with Daffodil Prentice, whose father is president of the mining company.

In frightening off some train robbers with the flashlight of his camera, Behan falls from the steps of the train and is left to make his way to Verdee on foot. Approaching the smelter in the early morning he witnesses and photographs a scene which verifies his suspicions as to the dishonesty of the mine's management. Through an intercepted telegram, Ralph Jones, the manager's son, learns of Behan's discovery, and plans to put him out of the way.

Behan gets into trouble at the Verdee hotel with a crowd of miners incited by young Jones, over the question of his identity with the mythical Behave, whom the miners believe he has murdered.

He leads them a chase through the town, and after rescuing from two of their number Daffodil Prentice and her maid, who have gone to telegraph for the girl's father, he doubles on his trail and returns to his room in the now deserted hotel. Hearing footsteps approach his door, he conceals himself in his big trunk and is carried in it away from the hotel by two men who, not knowing that he is within, think they are stealing his effects to be searched by Ralph Jones.

Behan, exhausted by the strain he has been under, falls asleep, and upon awaking and freeing himself from the trunk finds that he is in a small, cave-like room, apparently quite without means of exit. After closely examining the place, he hides himself under a pile of horse-blankets in a corner and goes to sleep. He wakes to the sound of a stifled sob, and on looking about the room sees that which makes him believe he is still dreaming.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### TO ANSWER FOR HIMSELF.

WHAT Dick saw on a stool in the corner, wobegone and desolate, was Daffodil. For a moment he was too completely flabbergasted to do more than blink his eyes and stare; then, with a leap which sent saddles and horse-blankets flying in all directions, he arose tumultuously from his couch.

Daffodil gave a shriek of terror, which swiftly changed to one of joy as she recognized the figure emerging from the mêlée, and, precipitating herself forward, was caught in his rapturous embrace.

There was, of course, a season of "love's fond foolishness" before either of them came to earth again; but their situation was not one where actual issues could long be forgotten, and presently, when Dick released her and stood back, she saw that his face wore the same fighting expression it had borne the night before, when he was caught between the two bands of searchers.

"Now, see here, my dearest," he said, speaking quickly, "I'm not going to ask you what has happened, or how you come to be here. That can all come later. What we've got to do is, get away; and in order to do that, the first thing I must learn is, where is the door?

"How did you come in, and what sort of a contraption is the entrance? Or, if you can't tell me that, just show me where it is located, and I bet you I'll soon drop on to the hang of the thing."

But Daffodil could only shake her head in perplexity.

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"I know that we are away down in a mine," she answered, "for I was brought down many long galleries, and over ever so many ladders, and kept going down, down, down, all the time. But how to get out is something more than I can tell."

"H'm!" and Dick stroked his chin. "The bowels of a strange mine is something of a proposition, isn't it? Still, we'll have to chance that. What I am asking you about now is the way from this room. Surely you remember how you came in?"

"Why, through the door, of course." Then, caught by something in his glance, she looked around her. "But there is no door!" she exclaimed wonderingly.

"Not now, perhaps—or, at least, so cunningly concealed that one would never find it unless he knew just where to look. But you can tell me where it was when you came in?"

"Why, here," she cried, running to place her hand against a spot on the wall. "Or, no," less confidently, "come to think, it was over here."

And a moment later she changed again, until at last she had to confess that she was utterly at sea.

"You see, Dick," she explained, "I was so frightened and confused, and I had passed through so many openings and doors, that I didn't pay any especial attention to this one. And then, when they told me to sit down, I was so overcome that I didn't notice them close it, or go away, or anything. I am sorry; but that is how it was."

He was bitterly disappointed, but he showed no trace of it.

"Never mind, sweetheart," he said, kissing away her tears. "It's simply another piece of our luck. If you could tell where the door is, we should probably get into a lot of difficulties, whereas now we will bide here quietly until the proper moment arrives, and then we will find the way made so smooth for us that there'll be danger of our slipping. Trust our luck every time to pull us safely through."

"Oh, Dick," she cried, "you surely don't see any luck in our present predicament?"

"Certainly I do," he averred. "What could be luckier for you than to find that I am here to protect and defend you, and what could be luckier for me than to have the stimulus and encouragement of your presence?"

Yet he knew that she had added a thousandfold to the difficulties and dangers of his plight, and sweet as was her nearness to him in his captivity, he would cheerfully have relinquished every penny of Uncle John's legacy to have had her at that moment safe home in Ravenswood.

"But you have not yet told me your adventures," he broke in, talking to hide the anxiety gnawing at his heart. "How did Jones manage to get you here—kidnap you?"

"Jones?" she repeated. "Is Ralph Jones at the bottom of this outrage, too?"

"Well, this is his cozy-corner, and the men around here call him 'guv'nor,' so it rather looks as though his fine, Italian hand had had something to do with it."

"But what motive could he have? Why should he want to make a prisoner of me?"

"I confess that is a point which has rather stumped me. I don't see any reason in it. Still, he may have one which we are not quite able to fathom. Suppose you go ahead and tell me just what happened. Then perhaps I shall be better able to judge."

"Well," she began, "this morning early I was awakened by a furious ringing at the door-bell, and when I put my head out of the window to inquire what was wanted, I saw a man I did not know, and seemingly in great agitation.

"He told me to dress and come down at once, as my father had sent for me to come to him, and when I insisted on knowing the reasons he said—or, at least I thought so at the time and now I believe I was not mistaken—that there had been a disastrous railroad wreck, and that papa was among the injured.

"When I got down to the door, though, he told me that I had misunderstood him, and that the accident had been at the mine.

"I grew a little skeptical at that; for I could not understand why papa, although he might have come over from Red Dog on a freight or a hand-car at that hour, should have gone out to the mine before coming home. But the fellow explained it by saying that he had

met you at the station and had been persuaded to go out at once, with the result that both of you had been caught in a cave-in and badly hurt.

"Well, naturally I was so wrought up over that, and the man seemed so honest and sincere in his story, that my suspicions vanished, and I accompanied him at once.

He was most polite and attentive all the way, and I grew quite ashamed of my doubts concerning him, even following him a long distance into the mine before I again began to question the truth of his story.

"Then he had me in his power, however, and when I refused to go farther unless he furnished some proof that my father was there, he threw off the mask and told me curtly that I would go where he wanted me to.

"I tried to run back then, but he caught me, and, with two other men who had come up, started to drag me along, until I consented to submit to their wishes provided they took their hands off me.

"The rest," with a shudder, "is like a nightmare — a seemingly interminable journey in the darkness, over yawning chasms, and up and down shaky ladders, and through unending, gloomy galleries, sick with terror all the time, not knowing what was going to become of me, until at last they left me here."

"My poor, poor darling," cried Dick, holding her close. "They shall settle with me for this! Every one of them shall pay richly for what they have made you suffer.

"But still," he mused, with a puzzled frown, "I fail to comprehend Ralph Jones's motive. It could have been nothing less than sheer malice on account of the aid you rendered me, and he must realize what he stands to lose by it; for he surely knows that he cannot hold you prisoner long, and that when your father learns of his action, he will spare no pains to obtain his punishment. No," he repeated, "I cannot see his game."

"Do you suppose that perhaps he had nothing to do with it?" questioned Daffodil. "That it could have been done without his knowledge?"

But her question was destined to be answered in a rather startling manner; for even as she spoke there came a slight whir and grating from the other side of the room, which caused Dick to dive hurriedly back under his horse-blankets, and Daffodil to resume her dejected attitude upon the stool.

Then, while they gazed in wonderment, a section of the solid wall rose slowly as upon well-oiled grooves, and disappeared into the roof.

Within the aperture stood Ralph Jones, a smile of triumph upon his face.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### A VISIT FROM THE HOST.

"WELCOME to my humble abode, fair lady," sneered Jones with ironic ceremonial. "It is not often that we are favored here with such loveliness. You find everything fairly comfortable, I trust?"

She disdained to make any reply, but simply stared back at him in haughty contempt, until even his brazen hardihood took shame and he reddened under her glance.

In order to hide his constraint, he lighted a cigarette and sauntered insolently forward into the room.

"Ah," he said, his eye falling upon the trunk, "the luggage of the late lamented, eh? Too sad that he can't be here to condole with you in your affliction.

"What's this?" he bent closer to examine the receptacle. "Somebody's been tampering here."

He turned to the door.

"Who brought this trunk in?"

"Bill Cook and Davis," a voice answered from without.

"Send them here to me at once."

In a few minutes the pair, uneasy and quaking in their shoes, stood before him. He surveyed them from under frowning brows.

"Didn't I tell you to get Behave's belongings and bring them here intact?" he demanded.

"Well, ain't we done it, guv'nor?" They spoke together. "Everything's thar in his trunk."

They shot an uncertain glance at each other, however, recollecting that they had simply taken the contents for granted; and their quick misgiving did not escape Jones's scrutiny.

"Oh, you know well enough what's in

the trunk, no doubt," he railed. "Which one of you is responsible for the condition of this lock?"

"'The lock?" stammered Bill Cook, bending forward to look. "Why, it's been cut out!" he exclaimed wonderingly.

"Yes, I am aware it has been cut out. But what I want to learn is, who did it?"

Jones flung back the lid, and whirled on them once more with a snort of wrath.

"Where are the rest of the things?" he roared. "Ah, I thought there was something back of this. You two have been helping yourselves."

The men in their amazement certainly looked guilty enough.

"'Fore heaven, guv'nor," asseverated Cook, "everything he had is thar."

"Everything he had! Do you mean to tell me that a man was taking a trip across the continent on this outfit?"

He tossed the stuff recklessly out upon the floor—so recklessly that Dick was seized with apprehension for the fate of his beloved camera.

Glancing at the meager pile, Cook was assured that it could never have furnished the weight "toted" by himself and his companion.

"I'll tell yer, guv'nor," he cried, "somebody's been in here!"

"Somebody been in here? Nonsense! How could any one get past Three-toes, who has been on guard in the passage all morning?"

"Mebbe he was in here aforehand, an' is a hidin' here yet." Cook waved his hand toward the heap of saddles in the corner, and Dick gave himself up for lost. "Look; thar was grub on the table when we brung in the trunk, an' it's all gone now!"

But Jones's angry distrust of his follower saved the threatened catastrophe.

"Liar!" he exclaimed. "I'll teach you to play tricks on me!"

And, springing forward, he planted a smashing blow squarely in the man's face.

It was an onslaught which might have felled a bullock, and the victim toppled prostrate; but Jones, unsatisfied, leaped forward and began kicking him about the head with his heavy shoes.

Daffodil could not stand that.

Rushing toward the unfortunate man, she sank down and shielded him with her arms.

"Stop!" she cried. "You shall not hit him again. The man is innocent!"

Jones desisted from his assault, but glared at her suspiciously.

"How do you know that?"

"Because I saw another man come in here, open the trunk, and take away a lot of things."

"Did you know him?"

She dared not hesitate now. To excite any doubts of her story might result in a search which would reveal Dick.

"Yes; I had him pointed out to me in the village yesterday. An especially villainous-looking man called Fenton."

"Ha!" Jones turned toward the door. "Three-toes, did anybody come by you this morning except those acting under my orders?"

"Not a soul—that is, I don't guess they did. I was away about three minutes once, when you called me, remember?"

"True. I had forgotten that." Jones was beginning to calm down now and be a little ashamed of his violence. "Here, some of you drag this lout away and souse him with a bucket of cold water. He'll come to all right. And, Three-toes, when Fenton comes in—

"Or, stop," and he whirled again upon the girl. "Did Fenton eat the food upon the table?"

She was uncertain what to answer. There might be some catch in the question which she did not perceive.

"No," she asserted finally. "I took it."

He grinned sardonically.

"Making yourself quite at home, aren't you? Well, then, Three-toes, you can cut out one part of the sentence I was going to give Fenton—that of living on air for a day or two. On account of his greed for clothes, though, you will strip him and let him spend a night in one of those nice, cold pits down on the lower level. No matter how he howls, don't let him have a stitch to cover him.

"And now," spreading out his hands, "clear out—the whole raft of you. I want to have a few moments' private conversation with Miss Prentice."

Had she been as completely alone as he believed her, this announcement would probably have caused Daffodil to swoon.

She was so disgusted by the display of his brutal methods, so shocked by the untamed ferocity of his nature, that she felt sickened and degraded at the thought of ever having admitted such a man to her friendship.

Her only sentiment toward him now was the repulsion she might have entertained for a venomous cobra or bloody-jawed tiger.

With Dick to protect her, however, in case an urgent necessity should arise, she felt less wholly at the superintendent's mercy, more free to use those weapons of feminine craft she had employed against him so successfully the night before.

He should not touch her, she vowed shudderingly to herself; but she would strive to mask her detestation of the man, and, so far as a woman might without losing her self-respect, play upon his sentiments for her in order to gain such knowledge as might be beneficial to herself and Dick in their predicament.

Perhaps, she thought, he might even be cajoled into describing the mode of egress from their prison-house, or at least vouchsafe some hints which could be turned to advantage in making an escape.

But the burnt child dreads the fire, and Jones turned a deaf ear to all her overtures, answering them only with black scowls and the curtest of monosyllables.

He stood by the table, restlessly kicking his feet and glowering at her, until he had thus disposed of several questions she put; then, as though reaching a final decision, he interrupted her in the middle of a remark.

"What I have to say to you, madam," he announced harshly, "is short and sweet. You have had the misfortune to be pretty closely associated with the dirty spy who came out here to pry into my affairs, and, unless I am vastly mistaken, are fully acquainted with all the discoveries he has made.

"This, I repeat, is your misfortune; for it makes you the sole repository of secrets concerning my business transactions which I do not choose shall be used against me. Behave is dead, and—"

"Dead?" The positive assurance with which he spoke caused her to gasp.

"Yes; dead or dying. That is a trifle of gossip which rather surprises you, eh?" with a malignant smile.

"How do you know?"

He mistook the peculiar expression upon her face for incredulity, and hastened to convince her.

"Oh, it is certain enough. He got his finish last night only a short time after you left him."

He seemed to take a fiendish relish in the torture he supposed he was inflicting upon the girl, and added a harrowing conjecture that the death was probably lingering and painful.

"It happened this way, you see. Dawkins, one of my men"—Daffodil gave a start, but, deeming it to be merely an expression of her agitated nerves, he paid no heed—"Dawkins, one of my men, between two and three o'clock this morning, saw a suspiciously acting chap sneaking along the 'cut-off' road. Upon being hailed, he gave no answer, but promptly took to his heels in the opposite direction.

"Dawkins was unable to follow him, owing to the fact that he had shortly before sustained a sprained ankle; but he had in his belt something which, as he expresses it, 'kin outclass any sprinter this side of eternal perdition.'

"Quickly he drew and fired, bringing the fellow to the ground; but, according to the story, the latter rose again and ran staggeringly into the woods, zigzagging so in his flight that both a second and third shot after him missed.

"My agent was, of course, unable to pursue him for the reason I gave you before; but he is confident, not only from the aim he took but also from the manner in which the fellow ran after being hit, that a vital spot was reached, and death must ensue within a short time."

"And can this Dawkins be depended upon?" questioned Daffodil.

"Oh, yes, he is one of my most reliable men. Besides, the fact that nothing has since been seen or heard of Behave substantiates him, and, in addition, we found a pool of blood, and irregular footprints in the soft earth at the spot where Dawkins says he was struck."

"Oh, delectable Dawkins!" was the thought of both the prisoners.

They wondered what innocent partridge or hare had been sacrificed to furnish that deceptive pool of gore.

"Yes," flippantly concluded Jones,

"I think there is hardly any question but that your darling is lying now in some secluded spot with his stark, pallid face upturned to the stars, as the novelists say. I suppose when we find him, and shovel him into a hole, you'll want us to drop an extra tear for you, eh?"

She merely ignored the grinning taunt.

"And is it also your intention to murder me?" she asked.

"Oh, no. I have reserved you for a different fate. I am going to marry you!"

"What?"

In spite of her determination not needlessly to anger him, she recoiled with horror at the bare suggestion.

"Yes," he nodded. "As I say, you know too much, and marriage, I have decided, is the most effective way to muzzle you. There is no use in protesting, either; if you prove refractory, we shall simply gag you, and one of my men will bow your head in the proper responses. It will all be regular, too. The officiating clergyman, although a half deaf and blind old hermit who lives up here in the mountains, and, as I understand, not inclined to ask too many questions where the fee is sufficient, is nevertheless a regularly ordained minister. When he pronounces us man and wife, it will stand."

She thought to shame him from his dastard purpose.

"And would you have a wife," she cried, "who utterly despises you, to whom your very presence is a loathing and abomination?"

He laughed at her vehemence; then, another thought striking him, his face grew dark with resentful ire.

"Hark you, Daffodil Prentice," and he smashed his big fist down upon the table, "there can be no question of love between you and me. Whatever might have been, the time for that is past. I am utterly indifferent as to what your sentiments may be toward me, and I tell you plainly that mine toward you are only those of malice and revenge.

"When you tricked me with your Delilah smiles last night, you thought you were doing a clever thing, but it would have been better for you if a millstone had been hung about your neck and you cast into the sea.

"All the love I felt for you turned then and there to bitter, burning hatred, and I resolved that I would get even with you if it were the last act of my life.

"What do I care whether you loath me? I am not marrying you for kisses and caresses, although they will be mine by right under the law, and I could take them now by force if I wanted to. I am marrying you partly for revenge—to humble you, and drag you down, and debase you, and knock you about if I choose to—but chiefly to seal your lips concerning matters which you should never have known."

She faced him white, but courageous. All disguise was thrown aside now.

"Do you think for one moment that a mock ceremony such as you propose—that any ceremony, in fact—could keep me from publishing your full villainy to the world the moment I am free? No! Why, I would go barefoot into the roads, shave my head, and shout it at street-corners, if that were the only way I could make it known."

"Shout it as much as you please, my dear. The only thing I care for is not to have it introduced as evidence in a court of law."

"Then I will do that, too. I shall file the complaints myself if necessary, and, going into the witness-box, tell such a story to judge and jury that they cannot fail to convict."

"Oh, no, you won't. Unfortunately for the success of any such scheme, the old English common law obtains in this country, and a wife is not allowed to testify against her husband. Now, do you see the point that I am driving at?"

She staggered back to her seat completely overwhelmed.

"And do you offer me no alternative to this marriage?" she questioned. "Can you not take my pledge, my promise? Why, I would even rather welcome death."

"There is no alternative," and he tapped his fingers lightly on the table. "The ceremony will take place promptly at three o'clock to-morrow afternoon. It would be sooner, only I have important business to attend to in the meantime which cannot be delayed. Please be ready, therefore, and do not force us to harsh measures to secure your compliance. It would be a shame to place any

other gag than the one matrimony imposes upon so pretty a mouth."

He half turned to go, but paused and came back.

"Is my blushing bride going to send me off without a kiss to ratify our betrothal?" he jeered. "Well, then, since she is so diffident, I shall have to take one for myself!"

He stooped as if about to suit his action to his words, and never until his dying moment was he so close to the "pearly gates" as while Dick Behan's finger pressed upon the trigger.

As she shrank cowering with horror and aversion from his touch, however, he straightened up with a laugh of derision, jauntily lighted a fresh cigarette, and strode across the room.

"Never fear, my dear," he mocked. "It's not your kisses, but your silence, that I want."

Then he manipulated the sliding door, and passed out.

Almost at his disappearance Dick was after him at the spot, feeling with his nails for cracks in the wall, eagerly scanning the surface, trying to discover the mechanism by which the hidden portal was worked.

Before he had made much headway, though, he was obliged temporarily to give over the attempt in order to minister to Daffodil, who was in a highly hysterical condition as a result of her trying interview.

She sobbed and cried, and clung to him like a frightened child, seemingly unable to control her emotions, and it was a long time before he was able to soothe her into anything like a state of composu

Even then she did not want to be out of the shelter of his arms, but insisted that he kneel beside her, where she sat on her stool, in order to assure her of his actual presence.

"What will we do? What will we do?" was her constant wail. "He says that he will marry me whether I consent or not, and that the marriage will stand in law."

And over and over again Dick had to swear that the unholy union should never take place, not even if he had to stand forth single-handed against the entire band.

Absorbed in themselves, they failed to note the whir and grating attendant to the opening of the door, and it was yawning wide when Daffodil, happening to glance up, pointed a warning finger and grew rigid with dread.

Dick grabbed for his revolver, only to recollect that he had carelessly left it among the horse-blankets when he so hastily arose to search for the secret entrance.

There was no chance now either to recover it or to seek his hiding-place; for the door, sliding upon its noiseless grooves, had almost risen to the roof!

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE FRIEND IN NEED.

TRANSFIXED, petrified, motionless as two statues, the discovered pair gazed in hopeless consternation at the gaping aperture.

There was but one thought in either of their minds—that Ralph Jones had returned and held them at his mercy.

Then, as they awaited his shout of triumph, and the sight of his sneering, exultant face, a low cackle of amused laughter broke upon their ears, and Dawkins appeared upon the threshold.

"Hallo, folks!" he hailed them jovially as he came forward and extended a hand to each. "Didn't expect a call from the old man so soon, did yer? Ankle's gittin' strong enough ter let me walk about a bit now, though," limping ostentatiously to and fro in front of them, "so I calc'lated I'd drop in an' see how you-all was gittin' along."

He bubbled up again with laughter at their manifest amazement in seeing him; but, even as he did so, remarked significantly that it might be as well to shut the front door, "in order to keep the chickens from strayin' in," and promptly proceeded to do so.

"Here! Wait a minute," cried Dick, interested enough now to recover the voice of which two such shocks in succession had momentarily deprived him. "I've got to see how that thing works."

"How it works? That's easy enough. Jest the same as a winder-sash. See," giving an exhibition of the mechanism, "you press with yer right foot on the

floor here, an' yer left hand on the wall here, an' she flies up; while, contrariwise, ef yer press over here with yer left foot, an' over here with yer right hand, she comes down. She's a solid block of stone, but she's balanced so nice that a kid kin move her, an' she's fitted so smooth into the wall that nobody what didn't know about it ever could find the place whar it is."

"True," assented Dick jubilantly; "but I know the place now, you see, and the way to work it; and that old block of stone will not hold me much longer. Come on, Daffodil; we must be moving."

But Dawkins raised a quickly dissenting hand.

"Hold on, there, perfessor; you're losin' some of them brains I was braggin' up so, ain't yer? Whar do you think you be? In a house whar you kin step right out onto the front lawn? Waal, let me tell you, it's a consid'able ways from here to any front lawn, an' thar's some pretty rough sleddin' in between."

But Dick shook off the detaining grasp upon his shoulder.

"All the same, I am going," he declared obstinately. "Any part of the road, no matter how perilous, is safer than remaining here."

"Wrong, the first time. This here's the safest spot in all the Verdee Mine fer you, an' what's more," as he picked up Dick in his muscular arms like a baby and deposited him on the pile of blankets, "right here is whar you are goin' to stay.

"Why, man alive," he explained, "without help you ain't got no more show to git out than that old cat without claws we've all heered about has in the place which we won't name on account of the lady.

"You jest sit still a spell, perfessor, an' let me see ef I can't frame up some sort of a scheme to turn the trick, although, between you an' me, it ain't goin' to be no easy job—what with Three-toes an' Sandy an' a bunch of other cutthroats rampagin' around loose an' liable to run into yer at any time.

"I'll tell yer," he broke in upon himself; "you tip me off how you come here, an' mebbe that'll give me an idee. I swear, I never was more s'prised in my life than when I opens that door an' sees you. I'd expected to find the lady; but the sight of you had me ready to take the pledge for about a minute an' a half. How'd you ever work it, perfessor?"

Dick, having by this time come to the conclusion that it might be wiser, on the whole, to trust the other's experience than to rush blindly into unknown dangers, accordingly narrated the experiences of both Daffodil and himself since parting with their associate the night before, bringing a grin of amusement to the lips of the listener more than once by his vivid description of his experiences inside the trunk.

Especially appreciative was Dave, too, of the sentence so unjustly meted out to Fenton for pillaging Dick's clothes.

"Tee-hee," he chuckled, "bad as that holler tree may be, I guess Fenton'd rather be there than here, ef he knowed what was a comin' to him. I had a half-hour dose of them cold pits once, an' it satisfied me good an' plenty."

"Surely you haven't that poor creature still tied up in the tree?" interposed Daffodil, compassionate even toward such a thorough-paced wretch as Fenton.

"I certainly has, lady, an' you kin thank yer lucky stars fer it, too. Ef he was loose, we could all be profitably engaged in makin' our wills."

"But he will starve to death, won't he?" asked Dick rather sharply. "You told me just now that on account of your ankle you would be stationed on guard-duty here for the next three days, giving that as the reason why you were unable to leave the mine and carry out a message from us."

Dawkins glanced at him a trifle reproachfully.

"Don't be gittin' any idee in yer head that I ain't on the square, perfessor. If I'd 'a' wanted to give you the double cross I could 'a' done it twenty times sence we met, an' you ought to know it. Them facts you've mentioned is all jest as I stated to you, an' I don't back water on none of 'em.

"As fer Fenton," he added carelessly, "my old woman promised to look in on him, an' take him a bite ef she found time, an' ef she don't, why, I suppose he'll jest have to stand it. I ain't a losin' no sleep over that varmint, an' I wouldn't advise you to, either."

Upon this representation Dick promptly apologized for his unworthy suspicions, and the talk once more resumed an amicable discussion of their predicament.

But, although many plans for flight were suggested and thrashed over in his way, none could be found which seemed to offer even a fair hope of success under the conditions which Dawkins pointed out as existing in the mine.

Unless he could hit upon some pretext for absence from his post, and guide them himself through the gloomy recesses of the mine, there was no possibility, he said, of their making the journey to the outside; and even with him as a convoy, their discovery and seizure was almost certain, so complete was the system of sentinels maintained by Jones.

Neither, as he had already explained, could he manage under the iron rule of the "guv'nor" to smuggle out an appeal for aid until relieved from his present duty of guarding their prison.

"Consekently," he summed up, "thar don't seem nothin' fer it, perfessor, but fer you an' the lady to bide here quiet until Friday, when I go off an' kin take a letter out to Mr. Prentice, tellin' him to rustle up a bunch of mounted police from over at Red Dog an' come after you."

At this suggestion Daffodil gave a low cry, and Dick, who was striding up and down the floor, turned with a passionate gesture of refusal.

"Impossible!" he declared hoarsely. "You forget this infamous marriage scheme which is set for three o'clock tomorrow afternoon. We must be away from here before that time, or, by Heaven, there will be no further question of concealment on my part. I shall reveal myself by sending a bullet straight to that villain's black heart."

"Just so," assented Dawkins calmly; "but, not to dispute yer word, I don't see no real necessity fer this gun-play ye're figgerin' on. 'Cordin' to my lights, this here rooster's neck kin be twisted in a different way."

"How?" asked Dick excitedly.

"Waal, fust question is, have you got any money with yer?"

"Yes, about a hundred dollars."

"Good! Then, I'm blamed ef I don't believe my plan'll work like a new-sharped drill in a piece of sandstone."

"But what is your plan?"

"Let me ask one fu'ther question. In this country a body can't marry more'n once an' have it legal, kin they?"

"Certainly not. But what has that to do with this case?"

"A whole lot. It'll save all this muss an' ruction you've been talkin' about. You kin lay under yer hoss-blankets thar an' take a snooze if yer want to, while he's a promisin' ter love, honor, an' obey."

"What? Me lie quiet here and permit that scoundrel to marry Miss Prentice?"

"Ah, but don't yer see, you must marry her *fust!*"

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### A STARTLING INTERRUPTION.

"I KNOW this old skeesicks that Jones has picked out ter tie the knot fer him," continued Dave, expatiating upon his somewhat startling proposal. "He lives all by hisself in a little cabin up here back of the trail, an' he's most always out gatherin' roots an' yarbs an' sich like. He's a sky-pilot, all right, but they say he had to quit the game 'count of gettin' too old, an' now he don't do nothin' in that line but odd jobs, like hitchin' folks, an' plantin' 'em, an' once in a while holdin' a prayer-meetin' with Gospel-hymns down to Jack Avery's barroom.

"So, comin' down to cases, what I figgered out was this. When he comes termorrer arternoon, an' everything is ready for the obsequies, I'll bu'st in an' tell Jones that thar's some trouble out at the mouth of the mine an' he's wanted at once. That'll take him off the scene, an' while he's gone you must pop out from under yer kivers and, takin' his place, tell the dominie ter go ahead.

"The old feller is most blind an' more'n half deef, an' he'll never s'picion but what everything's on the square an' you're simply Jones come back, until the pair of yer is hitched up hard an' fast.

"Then you must slip the hundred dollars into his hand an' tell him what's been did. Tell him, too, that Jones'll never believe but what he's been in on the play, an' 'll sure kill him ef he finds out how he's been flimflammed.

"Make it strong enough, an', with the hundred dollars to back you up, there

ain't no manner of doubt in my mind but what Mr. Sky-pilot will fall in with the scheme, an' reel off another marriage fer Jones without so much as a peep.

"'Tain't nothin' in this pocket to give yer away, you see; while t'other way, he kin not only cop off an extry bunch of coin, but leave everybody satisfied an' comfortable all hands 'round.

"Mebbe, too, ef he turns out to be more'n ordinary clever, you might coax him to take out that letter to Mr. Prentice what you've been talkin' about.

"I don't know as I'd try that, though, either," he reconsidered, with a shake of his head; "you can't afford ter take too many chances. I guess ef you kin git him ter stand fer the matrimony deal without givin' yer away to Jones, that'll be all you'd better ask of him."

Frankly intolerant of any such proposal at the start, both Daffodil and Dick were induced to lend ear as Dawkins proceeded to outline the details, and when he had finished they glanced at each other with an expression which showed that, if they were not fully persuaded, they were at least very strongly impressed.

It was a risky expedient, it is true, depending as it did so largely upon the compliance of a third party who might indignantly refuse to lend himself to the deception; yet would any man with a spark of humanity in his bosom, they asked themselves, deny the appeal which their tale must make upon him? Surely a one-time minister of the Gospel, no matter how far sunk from his sacred calling, must be stirred to pity their plight.

There was, too, the moral question involved, and Daffodil, sincerely religious, hesitated long at the idea of turning to mockery so solemn a sacrament; but she had to admit that here, if ever, the end justified the means, and that nothing could well be imagined more absolutely immoral than to permit herself to be forced into an actual marriage with Ralph Jones.

Besides, as Dick pointed out, she might salve her conscience by declining any voluntary part in the second ceremony, compelling them to bow her head to the responses, as had been threatened.

This, moreover, he thought, would settle any question as to her having committed bigamy; for no court could reasonably hold such a view when it was shown that she had acted throughout entirely under duress.

In the end they decided—provided no more feasible plan offered in the meantime—to follow out Dawkins's suggestion, and their ingenious counselor, blushing like a girl at the praise they accorded his wits, arose from his seat upon the trunk.

"Guess I'd better be takin' a little look around outside," he observed, plainly desirous of escaping their thanks. "Somebody might be snoopin' around, yer know, an' ef this here confab was dropped onto, that astuteness of mine ye're both jawin' about wouldn't assay up so high, after all."

But he had hardly raised the sliding door and passed through than he was back again in eager alarm, his voice quivering with excitement.

"Under kiver, thar, perfessor!" he panted. "They're comin'! No," as Dick made a dive for the horse-blankets, "into yer trunk this time. That's the only safe place fer you."

And hurriedly he assisted the fugitive into the receptacle.

Quick as they both were, though, Dave had no more than time to give one hasty glance around to see that all was safe, and resume his post outside, before a turbulent crowd came swarming and jostling into the chamber.

Then, as Behan watched through the holes he had made about the lock, it became apparent why Dawkins had insisted upon a new retreat.

The pile of saddles and horse-blankets was speedily disintegrated, each man seizing upon one; so that almost sooner than it takes to tell it the corner where they had lain was bare and empty.

Accouterments upon their arms, then, and slipping black masks over their faces as they went, the crowd hurried off tumultuously as they had come. The prison-house was again left to Daffodil and Dick.

"Now, what do you suppose that means?" he asked her, starting to raise the lid; but, instead of answering, she lifted a sharply admonishing finger, and he dropped back into the trunk.

It was only Dawkins, however, who had caused the grating at the door caught

by her quick ears; and, reassured by his announcement that all danger was over for the present, Dick once more emerged.

"What is it all about, Dave?" He was asking for information now, not merely expressing his surprise. "Are they off on another wild-goose chase after me?"

"Oh, no; you're supposed to be a corpse. This is in the reg'lar line of business."

"The regular line of business?"

"Yes. Three-toes was jest tellin' me that the old colonel got in onexpected from the East, an' he tipped off Ralph that there'd be a tidy bunch of the stuff on the next train follerin'. The boys are goin' to git it."

A sudden suspicion flashing into Behan's brain became a certainty. The masks, the saddles, the significant jests he had heard interchanged between the men as they crowded into and out of the chamber!

But he had stronger corroboration still, for he knew now why the "Skiddoo! Pull your freight!" with which Ralph Jones had addressed him when he thrust him out at the door of the Palace Hotel had sounded so strangely familiar to his ears.

As in a vision he saw again from the car-platform the rocky walls of the cut lit up by the glare of his flashlight, the men falling back in startled amazement from the unexpected manifestation, and heard a harsh voice of command from somewhere back of the right of way:

"Skiddoo! Pull your freight, fools! Can't you see they're ready for us?"

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE INSIDE OF A BUBBLE.

"RALPH JONES, then, is the road-agent? He and his men are responsible for all these hold-ups which have so puzzled the authorities?"

It was not so much a question on Dick's part as a way of announcing his arrival at a clear view of the facts.

Dawkins, however, gazed at him in quizzical surprise.

"Law, perfessor," he exclaimed, "ain't you tumbled to that afore? That was why I supposed Jones was so set on ketchin' you, 'cause you'd piped off the whole shootin'-match.

"Why, whar was yer eyes?" in some contempt. "What did yer suppose was the reason of all this circus performance? Sho, you must 'a' guessed it from the way this hang-out was fixed up. A blind man could tell it wasn't bein' used fer Sunday-school meetin's. Honest, didn't you never drop to the game until jest now?"

"No," confessed Dick, although he realized that the admission must inevitably destroy the other's respectful admiration for his sagacity. "I see now how thick-witted I was, but I believed these elaborate precautions were merely to conceal the fraudulent working of the mine."

"Shucks! That was only a patch to all the other deviltry that's been goin' on here. If Ralph couldn't think of somep'n new to start up, the old colonel was always ready with a fresh wrinkle fer him."

"I can readily believe that from what I have seen. Still, it was only the mine frauds with which I was concerned, and naturally I paid little attention to anything else.

"When I discovered convincing proof that the Verdee Mine was a swindle, I considered that my investigation was completed, and the only thing remaining was for myself and the other stockholders to see how much we could get back of our misappropriated funds."

"What?" An indignant exclamation from Daffodil caused them both to jump. "The Verdee Mine a swindle? You must be crazy. It is one of the richest properties in the country. Besides, no matter what these Joneses may have done, do you think that my father would—"

"Certainly not," Dick interposed. "Your father has been as badly taken in as anybody else. An honorable man of his stamp couldn't be expected to cope with two such unprincipled sharpers."

"But—but," she stammered, still unconvinced, "how could as shrewd a person as papa have been tricked? He told me that he knew the gold was there in tremendous quantities, had seen it mined with his own eyes, and that most of it assayed as high as eighty dollars a ton."

Dawkins laughed.

"He *thought* he did, you mean, lady," he corrected. "What your pa really seen was one of them acks like at a conjurin'

show, where the feller with the b'iled front pulls a couple o' rabbits an' a American flag out'n a silk hat which some lady or gent will please kindly pass up from the audience.

"Thar was always a lot of hammerin' an' drillin' an' blastin' goin' on when him or any other tenderfoot come around, an' thar was gold in sight, of course—stacked up in heaps an' bein' dragged out on cars to the smelter. Strictly high-grade ore it was, too, as good as yer pa says.

"But yer see, it didn't belong there. It had all been 'salted' in by the old colonel, an' was, as yer might say, the bait he used to ketch his suckers with. Fast as it was hauled out in the daytime, it was took back at night an' 'salted' over ag'in.

"Out the front door it'd come, an' off to the smelter with a slam-bang an' 'Hurrah, boys!' but afore it ever got a chance to git in the concentrate, it'd be brung back by night, around the back way.

"Yer must onderstand—an' Mr. Behave'll tell yer the same—we has two entrances to this mine; one out in front that everybody knows, an' the other hid back in the ravine, so that nobody'd ever guess it was thar 'less'n he had his nose shoved right inter it."

Dick had explained the most of this to Daffodil before in the intervals between their exciting experiences of the previous night; but then, in her anxiety and perturbation of spirit, she had grasped little more than that Ralph Jones was a very wicked man who might be counted on for almost any villainy.

Now, however, hearing the tale rehearsed in Dawkins's plain, unvarnished language, she gained a better idea of the dodge which had been worked. As the revelation proceeded her face went pale and her eyes darkened with trouble.

"You mean, then," she cried tremulously, "that the mine is absolutely no good? Oh, poor papa! He is ruined. Every penny that has been put into Verdee is sunk beyond hope. Is it not so?"

She looked from one to the other.

Dick, unable to meet her appealing glance, could only nod his head and turn away; but Dawkins thoughtfully rubbed his chin and took time to consider.

"Wa'al, I don't know," he said at length. "I don't want to raise no false hopes on nobody's part; but, on t'other hand, thar ain't no doubt but what I've seen indications which has made me think sometimes that this here old Verdee propersition might not be so played out as she looks.

"She was a good old hole in her day, remember, an' though the vein pinched out up thar under the spur of the mounting years ago, it's struck me more'n once from things I've seen that it might be picked up ag'in ef a body'd take the trouble to look fer it.

"Fu'thermore, I holds a pretty strong suspicion that the colonel an' Ralph has about the same idee kinkin' around in the back of their heads. I know when we was a blastin' out this 'hang-out,' the original plan was to run it about ten foot fu'ther along over toward that side; but one day I struck a piece of 'peacock' in the drift an' give it to 'em. They rubbered over it a long while, and talked together in whispers; an' then they decided all of a sudden that the room was big enough for 'em as it was, an' that we needn't go any fu'ther into that wall."

Behan, however, was inclined to be highly skeptical of such evidence.

"Nonsense, Dave," he protested, "if the Joneses believed, or even suspected, that they had a *bona fide* project on their hands, why should they take the trouble to resort to this elaborate system of deception?"

"Thar's one or two things, I guess, you haven't learned yit about the minin' business, perfessor," was the dry response. "That there is one of the fust-reader questions.

"Why? Because Colonel Jones ain't jest the sort to share up a find with a lot of suckers he's hooked on a salted mine. Time enough to 'tend to that when his fish quit bitin'. Then he kin show up that the mine's no good, buy it in fer little or nothin' from the stockholders, an' have the findin's all to himself. See how it's done?"

Dick, feeling decidedly squelched, hurriedly turned the subject.

"How is it, though," he asked, "that the precious pair have added train robbing to their other industries? Surely the money was coming in fast enough from the 'suckers,' as you call them, wasn't it?"

"Oh, that's on account of Prentice. Yer see, afore he come, old colonel an' Ralph had everything their own way. They could charge up a lot of timberin', an' pad the pay-roll, or what not, an' nobody the wiser. But Prentice was from Missouri, an' kept yelpin' so fer vouchers, an' askin' so many questions, that they had to scheme out another way.

"They sounded all the boys, an' them what wouldn't stand fer it was bounced; while the rest of us was swore' into a gang, an' promised a share of the proceeds.

"It's all been easy enough. Colonel an' Ralph knows jest what train the sucker money is comin' on, of course; so we never miss a haul—or didn't," with a grin, "until you turned the pictur' machine on us. Then," he continued, "even ef they did track us back to the mine, which ain't noways likely, they'd never be able to git proof on us. All our stuff is kept in here, an' nobody who didn't know the combination could ever find it. Why, a body might pass outside that door a thousand times without guessin' that thar was anything back of it but solid mounting."

"I suppose, too, that Ralph's being a deputy sheriff is a guarantee against detection?" put in Behan.

"Yes, naterally that helps. Oh, as I said, it's all been easy enough. But—but—" He paused and let his eyes fall.

"But what?"

"I'm sick of it. Sick of it, I tell yer!" He had dropped his usual good-natured drawl, and was speaking with intense fire and earnestness. "Ralph Jones thinks he's got us in his power now, an' he treats us like dogs. Treats us like dogs, 'cause we are dogs—curs and crooks who have to run when he cracks the whip!

"Oh," he broke off with a cry, "I want to go back to bein' a honest man ag'in. I want to do a square day's work fer square wages, an' be able to look my old woman an' my kids in the face when I go home at night.

"Can't you give me a straight job, perfessor? I kin give all sorts of satisfact'ry references."

Dick never even smiled at the unconscious humor of those "satisfactory references," so stricken was he with pity at the man's wistful plea.

Kindly he placed his hand on the big fellow's shoulder.

"Never think that I'll forget what you have done for me, Dave Dawkins. As I told you last night, we three here are partners, and we'll stand or fall together. I don't know that that means very much at present; for even if I get out of here all right, every penny I have is tied up in the Verdee Mine, and whether any of it can be recovered is a serious question.

"Still, in a new country like this, the old camera there ought to make a man a living, and so long as Daffodil and I have a crust you shall share it. I promise you now that, if I have to open up a studio in Verdee, you shall be my assistant."

Dawkins seemed struck with the proposal.

"It'll be a go ef you kin make tintypes," he cried. "Folks around here is partial to tintypes."

Rembrandtish shadows and high-art effects went down for the full count and out. After to-morrow Dick Behan would have a wife to support.

"Then tintypes it shall be, by all means," he assented without a shudder.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### "WAS THERE EVER SUCH A BLIND FOOL?"

WHEN the band returned from its foray that night the members were in jubilant mood.

Dawkins had told Dick that they expected to make a haul of over one hundred thousand dollars, and it was evident from the remarks which were made as the loot was stacked up on the table to await Ralph Jones's counting and apportionment that it would reach an even higher figure.

The leader, for policy's sake, had not been with them on this occasion, having turned over the command to a lieutenant and remained ostentatiously in the village with his father. Therefore the spoils were to be left in the "hang-out" until his arrival on the morrow.

Over it the gang gloated and congratulated one another for some time; but presently Dawkins drove them all out, and Dick was able to clamber from his trunk to seek the softer ease of the recovered horse-blankets.

Yet, for all the improvement in his bed, he could not sleep. He could hear Daffodil's soft breathing from the other side of the room, where, utterly worn out, she slumbered upon a makeshift couch arranged by Dawkins; he realized that no one could dream of his being under the saddles now that they had been disturbed, and hence the chances of discovery were greatly lessened; he was tired, too—tired to the bone. But still he could not sleep.

The sight of the money alluringly stacked up upon the table acted as a potent stimulus to keep his eyes covetously open and his brain buzzing with speculations.

There was his legacy, he told himself, the full amount which his old dotard of an uncle had chucked into this rotten enterprise. It was his—his by every law of right, moral or legal. Was there no way by which he could sequester it?

Cudgel his brains as he might, though, each new stratagem which suggested itself only seemed more futile than the last.

The loss of the money must be speedily noted, and stringent inquiry made. Dawkins and Daffodil would be the ones chiefly suspected, and who knew what indignities, or even tortures, Jones might perpetrate upon them in order to gain a confession?

Or, even leaving this consideration aside, a thorough search of the chamber would inevitably be instituted, with the result of detection for himself and disaster for them all.

No, look at it as he might, the act of restitution was at present impossible. He would have to let Jones keep the money now, and wait upon the slow processes of the courts for recovery.

Nevertheless, so great was the temptation of this visible opulence within his grasp, that Dick could not forego handling and touching it.

Wriggling out from his lurking-place, and moving upon tiptoe for fear of waking Daffodil, he approached the table. Looking down at the array, he found it harder than ever to resign the thought of appropriating what was so justly his own.

There the booty lay, bags of chinking coin and packages of crisp, new bills, just as it had come from the rifled safe of the express car.

Behan longingly fingered it, opening the sacks to feel their golden contents, and counting the sheaves of rustling currency; but when temptation gripped him especially hard, the sight of Daffodil sleeping so peacefully over in the corner would restore his resolution, and he would once more abandon the impracticable thought.

Not for a hundred thousand times a hundred thousand could he thus add to the perils which already encompassed her.

Then, just as he was about to give over the pastime in which he had been indulging and return to his own corner, his eye was caught by a penciled memorandum on the band surrounding one of the packages of bills.

"For G. Weatherby," it read, and when he came to examine, he found that most of the other packages were marked the same way.

In fact, it was plain from this banker's mark that an even one hundred thousand dollars of the money had passed through the hands of Weatherby.

"Now, what does this mean?" puzzled Dick. "No one could have been more explicit than this same G. Weatherby in denouncing Colonel Jones and his scheme, yet here is proof that he has personally invested a fortune in the venture. What on earth could have induced so sudden and radical a change in his sentiments?"

The amount, too, struck him as an odd coincidence. Weatherby's contribution totaled exactly the sum which Uncle John had squandered the same way.

Curious that two such shrewd and canny men should have yielded to the persuasive wiles of Colonel Jones, and to precisely the same figure.

When one begins to question, there is no saying whither it may lead. Come to think of it, thought Dick suddenly, how did he know that Uncle John had gone into the swindle at all?

He stopped and looked up, startled by the chain of possibilities which such a reflection unfolded.

How *did* he know? He had but G. Weatherby's word for it, and Weatherby might have been deceiving him for his own ends.

He could not help but remember how the lawyer had warned him against discussing his affairs with any one else, lest they might drop to his proposed trip of investigation, and carry the news to Colonel Jones. Weatherby, too, had certainly been very officious in arranging for the journey and expediting his client's departure.

Still, how foolish were any such conjectures! Why should Weatherby have told him that the legacy was sunk in Verdee, proclaiming it a fraud, and have sent him out to investigate, unless the money was so invested, and he believed the trip would disclose evidence by which to recover? He must have known that when the heir came back—

Dick checked his thoughts once more, staggered by the new suggestion which had flashed upon him.

*Suppose Weatherby did not expect him to come back?* Suppose Weatherby knew of the conditions existing at Verdee, and trusted to the Joneses to see that his client bothered him no more?

The mustard-seed of doubt in Behan's mind had by this time grown to a full-sized tree of suspicion.

As Cuvier, the naturalist, is said to have been able to reconstruct any extinct bird or beast from a mere sight of its thigh-bone, so Behan, schooled to the arts of villainy by his recent experiences, deduced from the banker's memorandum a cunning and deep-laid plot for his own undoing.

Weatherby, as he now saw it, while all the time in cahoot with Colonel Jones, had played upon his credulity by denouncing the latter and proposing this so-called trip of investigation, confident that if such a greenhorn as Dick once thrust his head into the lion's mouth he would never be able to get it out again.

Then, with Behan out of the way, the lawyer, acting under the power of attorney which Dick had so rashly given, had only to convert the Behan estate into money and do with it as he chose.

In order, no doubt, to forestall the possible appearance of the other heirs, however, or any claim against him in the very unlikely contingency of Dick's return, Weatherby had arranged to put the money beyond hope of legal recovery by doing the very thing he had falsely ascribed to old John Behan, and investing it in the Verdee bubble.

Who would ever dream of suspecting that the funds so converted had managed, through the medium of a Far Western "hold-up" to find their way back to Weatherby again? Securely entrenched behind the law, he could laugh at any demands which might be made upon him.

Certain that he had hit upon the true explanation for that "G. Weatherby" memorandum upon the bank-notes, Dick, forgetting all caution, began to stamp and rave so over his own gullibility that Daffodil started up from her sleep in alarm.

"What is it? What is the matter, Dick?" she cried.

Instead of answering, he turned upon her with another question.

"Daffodil, do you know, or did you ever hear your father say, that old John Behan, of Ravenswood, had invested in Verdee to any considerable extent?"

She laughed.

"I know very distinctly that he did not. He was interested in the proposition for a time, I believe, and even made a trip out here to look into matters for himself; but after he came back, nothing would have induced him to touch it.

"Why, one of his chief diversions was to go about the streets of Ravenswood, decrying the project, and prophesying evil for every one concerned in it. My father actually had words with him about the way he was acting, and made me stay away from there, although before that I had been a great favorite with Uncle John, and I got in the habit of dropping in to see him almost every day—

"But what on earth is the matter, Dick?" she broke off, for again he was snarling and grinding his teeth. "What difference does it make whether old John Behan was in Verdee or not?"

"All the difference in the world," he choked. "I am his nephew and sole legatee."

"But—" she started to question, but stopped with a rush of comprehension. Of course, she recalled now, "Behave" was only the name with which she had ticketed him for the journey herself, although so used to it had both of them since become, it seemed to belong to him by right.

Then, too, she remembered seeing him on the Ravenswood platform with G. Weatherby. Why, if she had thought, she might have known all the time that this was the young photographer who had inherited John Behan's fortune!

Then another memory struck her.

"Oh, Dick," she cried excitedly, "what did you mean by saying last night that you are poor? You are rich, quite rich."

"I *was* rich, you mean," he corrected her with a groan. "There on the table lies my fortune, and I've got to lie meekly here among the horse-blankets and see Ralph Jones quietly take possession. Oh, was there ever such a blind, idiotic fool as I in all the world?"

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### THE DAY OF THE WEDDING.

THEY talked over the situation at length, even going so far as to call in the inventive Dawkins to assist at their deliberations; but no shift could they devise to permit of Dick's abstracting his legacy from the booty upon the table.

Dawkins actually turned pale at the bare suggestion of such a thing.

"You think you've seen Ralph Jones tear around some, don't you?" said he. "Why, what you've seen ain't the bleatin' of a lamb to the way he'd cavort ef thar was even so much as a five-cent piece gone from that pile on the table. He'd turn me and Miss Prentice inside out an' claw through our vitals for fear we might 'a' swallered it, an' he wouldn't leave a speck of dust on the floor but what he'd kick it over and look under it.

"No, no, perfessor, unless you're pertickler anxious to put all three of us out of the world, don't git no such idees as that in yer nut. Yer can't git away with it, an' I know."

He was also rather pessimistic in his views as to the possibility of recovering any of the money from G. Weatherby by legal process.

"Yer see, I've seen consid'able lawin' in my time, perfessor," he explained, "an' many a poor miner I've knowed to git swindled out of a claim he owned fair an' squar' as you own this one. I agree with yer, too, that things has been done about as yer say by this here lawyer sharp. Fact is, I've heered Ralph an' the colonel speak once or twice of a party back East that was sort of hand-in-glove with 'em, an' ef I ain't mistook, the name they used was Weatherby.

"Now, my advice ter you—'specially seein' that Miss Daffodil here says the sharp is well heeled—is not to waste no time foolin' with courts an' juries, but do like you done to me. Bend a gun under the scoundrel's nose, and tell him ef he don't produce you'll blow the top of his head off. That's the way to deal with them kind of folks."

Nor from this position was Dawkins able to be moved. Indeed, he refused to discuss the matter any further, but, regarding his as the only feasible solution which could be offered, prepared to withdraw, announcing that it was getting toward morning, and there was no knowing how soon "one of them prowlin' kiotes might come sneakin' around. I guess, too," he added significantly, "I'll take this little bunch of change along with me. Not that I misdoubt yer none, perfessor, but I ain't goin' to run no resk of yer possibly gittin' absent-minded an' stickin' some of it inter yer jeans without thinkin'."

In an excess of caution he actually did remove the booty outside the door, and thus performed a service for Dick, although not just in the way he intended; for, relieved from the presence of the tantalizing one hundred thousand dollars, the prisoner was able after a little while to compose his excited nerves and finally drift off to sleep.

It was about noon before either he or Daffodil awakened, and they were startled to find that three o'clock was so near at hand, blaming themselves a little, too, for spending in slumber hours which they might have devoted to seeking some better plan for outwitting Ralph Jones than the desperate hazard they had chosen.

With the marriage almost at hand, the scheme upon which they had agreed seemed to become every moment more hopeless, more certain of defeat.

Yet it was that or nothing. They could but strive to keep up their nerve.

Ralph Jones had as yet put in no appearance. He had been busy in the village all morning, showing great activity

in making arrangements for the pursuit of the train-robbers, and had not been able to get away; but he had sent word, so Dawkins announced, that he would be on hand at three o'clock, and that all must be in readiness for the ceremony.

The swift minutes ticked away, until at last he arrived, sneering and arrogant as ever, but showing a slightly better humor as his eyes fell upon the rich store of loot which Dawkins had replaced upon the table.

Dick's thoughts while the fellow was counting it over and transferring it to a dress-suit case, which he had brought with him, may be better imagined than confided to paper.

At length, though, the task was completed, and Jones, turning to Daffodil with his mocking smile, asked:

"Are you ready, my darling?"

Her heart was beating wildly, but she bravely stood up and answered him:

"Ralph Jones, if you insist upon this travesty of marriage, I cannot prevent it. I warn you, however, that I shall make no responses to the ceremony except under force, and that I most solemnly protest against the step you are about to take. With this understanding, I am as ready as I ever shall be."

He laughed lightly.

"On my word, you are quite melodramatic. And you refuse to answer the responses, eh? Well, suit yourself; I guess Dawkins can nod your head for you at the proper places.

"Don't think, though, that you'll evade a legal marriage on that ground. You'll find it hard work to get witnesses that you were not as willing a bride as ever stepped to the altar.

"Dawkins," he ordered, "go out to the front of the mine and bring in that old scarecrow you'll find there. You won't have to blindfold him; he's so blear-eyed that he can't see a foot ahead."

Then the three people in the room resigned themselves to a few moments' wait, Jones lounging easily against the table, Daffodil and Dick with nerves as tense as fiddle-strings.

Perhaps five minutes passed; then there came the sound of footsteps from the passage, and the bridegroom tossed away a cigarette and straightened up.

But it was not Dawkins's drawl which assailed their ears. Instead, it was an angry voice raised in altercation.

"Naw, I won't tell you," it snarled. "What I've got to say is fer the guv-'nor's own ear. Let me pass, I tell you. I don't care what he's doin'; I've got to see him right now."

There came an interval wherein some one was evidently trying to argue with the man; and then the voice rose again, shrill with fury.

"What's that? Me to the cold pit fer stealin' clothes? That lyin' she-cat! I'll fix her clock for her!"

Breaking away from those who would have restrained him, the man flung himself tumultuously through the passage, and stood framed within the door.

It was Fenton!

*(To be continued.)*

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# THE HAT THAT TOLD TALES.

By LEE BERTRAND.

Relating the frightful discovery of a husband just back from his honeymoon.

IT took John Henry Peterson exactly fifteen minutes, by the clock on the mantelpiece, to bid his wife good-by, and even then it was only by a mighty, almost superhuman effort that he managed to wrench himself away.

"Be sure to come home as early as possible, dearest," she called after him.

"I will—I will," he answered vehemently, as he walked toward the elevators. "I'll be back in time for supper, pet, without fail."

"And take care of yourself—for my sake," she entreated.

"I surely will, my own," he replied earnestly as he stepped into the car and was borne swiftly to the ground floor of the hotel.

By these signs it may be rightly guessed that Mr. and Mrs. John Henry Peterson were in the honeymoon stage of their matrimonial existence.

As a matter of fact, this was their first sad parting. The evening before they had returned to New York after a two weeks' bridal trip to Niagara Falls, and had taken up a temporary residence on the tenth floor of a moderate-priced hotel near Madison Square.

And now stern duty beckoned to John Henry with an inexorable finger, informing him that the leave of absence granted him by his employers was fully expired, and that he must return to the office to resume the daily grind of his unromantic labors.

The young husband left the hotel with a heavy heart and sighed repeatedly as he walked across Madison Square, with the intention of taking the Sixth Avenue Elevated down-town.

As he approached the Flatiron Building, John Henry suddenly noticed that the wind was blowing a veritable hurricane. It was pretty breezy all over town; but at this point it was twice as blowy as it was elsewhere.

He was obliged to hold on to his hat with both hands to avoid having it whisked from his head; but even this precaution did not save him, for there came an unusually severe gust, which almost swept him off his feet; and, in order to preserve his balance, he instinctively threw out his hands, thereby, of course, momentarily letting go of his headgear.

That movement proved his undoing; for his hat—a black derby, brand new, bought especially for his honeymoon—was suddenly lifted from his head and went flying along the ground, like a frightened rooster pursued by mischievous boys.

John Henry immediately gave chase. The sight of a man running after his hat is pathetic in the extreme. It was enough to make the angels weep to see John Henry chasing that derby.

Several times the hat would rest on the muddy pavement as though tired of running away and determined to give itself up, like a desperate criminal.

And then, just as John Henry, with a confident and trimumphant expression upon his perspiring countenance, would stoop and put out his hand to seize it, the hat would suddenly take wing again and baffle his frantic efforts to recapture it.

It was no consolation for John Henry to know that he was not the only man engaged at that moment in the painful and provoking pursuit of an elusive headpiece; but, nevertheless, it was a fact.

The gust of wind which had removed his hat had also bared the heads of several other unfortunates.

John Henry was only one of a small army of desperate men who were simultaneously chasing hats in the vicinity of the Flatiron Building.

All kinds of headpieces, derbies, alpines, and even the expensive silk variety were soaring in the air. The atmosphere was thick with hats and the despairing cries of angry victims.

John Henry, his teeth set grimly, his hair blowing into his eyes, his breath coming in quick gasps, persistently kept after his fleeing derby until the latter was stopped by the hoof of a passing cab horse. Thus he won the contest and triumphed over the hat, after all; but, inasmuch as the horse's hoof had gone through the crown, John Henry did not feel particularly elated at the outcome of the chase.

"Confound it!" he growled, throwing the battered derby into the gutter. "I can't wear it now. I'll have to return to the hotel and get another hat, and I'm late enough as it is. The boss hates unpunctuality worse than poison, too. However, it can't be helped."

He was just about to retrace his steps, when suddenly a brown derby hat came rolling toward his feet. He stooped and seized it, with the intention of restoring it to its owner; but, looking around him in all directions, he was surprised to perceive that nobody appeared to be in pursuit of this particular hat.

All the other victims of the mischievous breeze had by this time recovered their headgear, and were busily engaged brushing off the dust with their coat-sleeves—that is to say, all the other victims except the owner of this brown derby, who was nowhere in sight.

For fully five minutes John Henry

stood there on the sidewalk, with the hat in his hand, waiting for the unknown to appear, until a cabman, driving by close to the curb and observing him in this attitude, yelled to him jeeringly: "Why don't you put on your hat, you idiot? You ain't in church."

The cabman's remark suggested something to the hatless John Henry.

This derby seemed to be without an owner. His own hat was ruined, and he didn't have time to return to his hotel to get another. Why shouldn't he appropriate this one, which had come to him as though by a special dispensation of Providence?

He put the brown derby on his head, and found that it fitted him perfectly. Then he yielded to the temptation, and decided to proceed down-town with this borrowed hat.

His conscience did not smite him until he had climbed the stairs of the L station at Twenty-Third Street and seated himself aboard a train.

Then he began to feel somewhat ashamed of his act, as he pictured the real owner wandering despairingly all over town, looking for his missing hat.

But the train had already started, so, of course, it was too late to go back and make amends.

"Probably the fellow who lost it can afford to buy another," argued John Henry, trying to square matters with his conscience. "At any rate, I waited long enough for him to come and claim it, and he didn't show up. He couldn't expect me to wait there all day.

"Perhaps there's a name inside the hat, in which case I'll do my best to return it to its owner to-night. I've no desire to steal it—I'm only borrowing it for the time being."

He then examined its interior.

There were no initials inside; but there was a folded slip of paper stuck in between the sweat-band and the felt, and he drew this out, eagerly thinking that it might provide some clue to the identity of the owner.

The folded piece of paper was a note, and as John Henry glanced at it he was struck by something strangely familiar about the handwriting.

"Where have I seen that writing before?" he asked himself. Then, with a sharp exclamation of surprise, he suddenly realized that it was without doubt the handwriting of his own wife.

"What a strange state of affairs!" he mused. "Here I find a hat, and it's got a note from my own dear little wife inside. Now, what can be its meaning?"

As the answer of this question could be best supplied by perusing the note, John Henry promptly proceeded to do so. And this is what he read:

DEAREST HONEY-BOY:

I must see you at noon to-day. Something important. Will wait for you under the big clock in the general post-office and let you take me to lunch. With a million kisses, your loving

MARJORIE.

At first, John Henry took it for granted that the note was addressed to himself, and he smiled his tender appreciation of the terms of endearment it contained.

"Dear little girl," he mused. "Of course, I'll keep this appointment and take her to lunch. How sweet she is, and what a lucky fellow I am!"

And then he recollected that he had found this note in another man's hat, and the fact struck him as strange—passing strange, indeed.

He was positive that this brown derby was not his, and that he had never set eyes on it until the wind rolled it at his feet. Then how, by all that was wonderful, had this note—undoubtedly written by his wife and addressed to himself—got within its lining?

It certainly was a most mysterious state of affairs, and it puzzled John Henry exceedingly. How was he to account for it, unless—

With a sudden spasm of apprehension, he quickly turned the sheet of paper over and glanced at its back. Then his face turned white, and he gave a gasp of horror and amazement.

On the reverse side of the note was written, in his wife's handwriting:

Mr. Chauncey O'Brien,
130 West 30th Street,
New York City.

"Good Heavens!" he groaned. "Is it possible? Can my eyes be deceiving me? I'd better consult an oculist at once.

"My wife writing to another man, making an appointment to lunch with him and calling him her 'Dearest honey-boy'! Am I awake, or am I dreaming? And she sends him a million kisses and signs herself 'Your loving Marjorie'! Is this some horrible nightmare?

"And yet, it must be true! Here's the note and here's the address on the back, and there can't be the slightest doubt that both are in her handwriting. And the note was in his hat, too. This brown derby must belong to that scoundrel, Chauncey O'Brien. He must have stuck this piece of paper inside for safe-keeping."

John Henry presented such an alarming appearance as he sat, bareheaded, glaring first at the note and then at the brown derby and muttering to himself, that a nervous woman sitting opposite to him in the car got up hastily and changed her seat in affright; while another passenger, who had been watching him intently, whispered to the conductor that there was a crazy man aboard the train, and advised the trainman to summon an ambulance at the next station and get rid of the maniac before they were all murdered.

As a matter of fact, John Henry was pretty nearly crazy just then. Faith and cold facts were struggling with each other for the mastery of him.

He hated himself for doubting his sweet, pretty, clinging little wife; and yet, confronted by the realities of the hat and the note, how could he believe in her?

He was a student of Shakespeare, and a line from "Twelfth Night" rose in his mind just then to add to his agony.

"She seems too fair to be false," he groaned. "And yet Shakespeare says that 'Nature with a beauteous wall doth oft close in pollution.' The immortal bard understood the sex better than I do. He knew what he was talking about, and he must have had just such a case as this in mind when he wrote those words. Good Heavens, this is awful! I can't stand it any longer."

He jumped up from his seat so hastily and with so much wildness in his eyes that the nervous woman, before mentioned, uttered a little scream of terror, and the man who had warned the conductor drew a tiny penknife from his pocket and prepared to sell his life as dearly as possible.

But, of course, John Henry did not have the slightest intention of committing violence on anybody aboard the train.

They had come to a stop at the Fourteenth Street station, and he rushed from the cars like a madman, still holding the note in one hand and the brown derby in the other.

To replace that hat upon his head after discovering that it was the property of the hated Chauncey O'Brien was not to be thought of for an instant. He would prefer to go bareheaded for the rest of his life rather than avail himself of any of the property of his hated rival.

His first thought was to return to his hotel and confront his wife with the evidences of her perfidy. The prospect of being late at the office no longer worried him.

What cared he for the displeasure of his employer, or even the loss of his job, in view of the greater tragedy which had come into his life?

On second thoughts, however, he decided that, instead of returning to his wife, he would go, first of all, to 130 West Thirtieth Street, the address given in the note, and interview Mr. Chauncey O'Brien.

He yearned to meet Mr. O'Brien face to face and kill him without compunction; and as he jumped upon a northbound Sixth Avenue car, his murderous thoughts expressed upon his pallid countenance, and the derby hat in his hand, he presented such a wild appearance that the other passengers shuddered at the sight of him.

When he reached the address on West Thirtieth Street a fresh shock awaited him.

Number 130 proved to be one of a row of dilapidated looking two-story buildings, and a sign over the doorway bore the legend:

CHAUNCEY O'BRIEN,
Chimney-Sweep.

"Horrors!" gasped John Henry. "Can this be my rival? Can this be the fellow Dorothy has invited to take her out to lunch, and to whom she sends a

million kisses? A chimney-sweep! Bah! I gave her credit for better taste."

When he entered the dingy little shop, he found that Mr. O'Brien was not in evidence. A tall, brawny, untidy-looking woman, with her touseled hair done up in curl-papers and the sleeves of her soiled shirt-waist rolled up to the elbows, asked him tartly what she could do for him.

"I want to see Mr. Chauncey O'Brien," replied John Henry, with all the fierceness he could muster.

"Well, he ain't in just now," snapped the woman. "Won't I do? I'm his wife. If it's an order, you can leave it with me, young feller."

"You his wife!" gasped John Henry. "You don't mean to say that he's married?"

"I'd like to hear him or anybody else say that he ain't," replied Mrs. Chauncey. "I'd show 'em!"

"Good Lord!" groaned John Henry. "A married man! That makes it so much the worse. This is awful—awful!"

"What is awful?" demanded Mrs. O'Brien. "What on earth are you talking about, young man? If you've got anything to say against my husband, you'd better hurry up and get it off your chest. If he's been misbehaving himself, he shall suffer for it, I warrant you."

She looked so terrible as she uttered this threat that John Henry suddenly made up his mind to take her into his confidence, for it occurred to him that he could get an ample sufficiency of vengeance on Mr. Chauncey O'Brien by so doing.

"Madam," he said, somewhat fearfully—for there was no telling in what spirit this Amazon-like creature would receive the tidings of her husband's perfidy—"I have some bad news for you. Your husband *has* been misbehaving himself."

"What's he been doing?" growled the woman. "Hurry up and tell me. Has he been getting drunk again? I'll drunk him, the tipsy wretch!"

"It's worse than getting intoxicated, madam—much worse," John Henry assured her. "Read this note, please, and you'll understand."

Mrs. O'Brien read the note, and her fists clenched savagely.

"You don't mean to say that this disgraceful letter was written to him?" she almost screamed.

"You'll find his name and address on the back," John Henry assured her. "He must have given her some encouragement, or she never would have written it."

"The villain!" shouted the angry woman, her eyes flashing fire. "The deceitful vampire! I'll thrash him black and blue when I get hold of him. And I'll attend to the hussy who wrote this, too, before I get through."

"You can leave the punishment of the lady to me," said John Henry hastily. "She's my wife. I'll attend to her, and I'll leave you to look after Mr. Chauncey O'Brien."

"I'll look after him, all right; never fear," said Mrs. O'Brien, her huge frame trembling with passion. "He'll get all that's coming to him, I promise you."

With this assurance John Henry left the store, still carrying the brown derby in his hand. It was not until he had reached Sixth Avenue and noticed that passers-by were looking at him curiously that he suddenly realized that he was bareheaded.

He dropped into a hat-store and purchased a new derby, leaving the brown one in the store. Then he started to go to his hotel to denounce his wife; but suddenly he thought of a better plan.

He would pay a visit to his friend, Peter Pollard, attorney and counselor at law, and retain him to begin divorce proceedings immediately; for, of course, he could not continue to acknowledge as his wife a young woman who made clandestine luncheon appointments with a chimney-sweep.

Peter Pollard's office was on the tenth floor of an office-building at Broadway and Twenty-Seventh Street; and as the dejected husband entered, the lawyer—a tall, lean, very intelligent looking young man—greeted him warmly.

"Hallo, John Henry, awfully glad to see you. How's married life? How is the missus?"

"It's about her that I've come to see you," groaned John Henry as he sank

into a chair near the attorney's desk. "I want to get an absolute divorce."

"A divorce!" cried Pollard with an incredulous laugh. "Heavens, man, you've only been married a couple of weeks! Aren't you rushing things a bit? Such extreme haste is really indecorous."

"Don't laugh at me," cried the other wildly. "I'm perfectly serious. I've got good cause for taking this step, as you'll agree when you read this," and he flung on the desk the note he had found in the hat."

Pollard perused both sides of the paper, and the smile disappeared from his countenance.

"Humph! Are you sure that this is your wife's handwriting, John?"

"Positive. There can't be the slightest doubt of it. I wish to Heaven I could believe that it is a forgery, but I know that it is not."

"Well, you certainly ought to know your wife's chirography by this time," agreed the lawyer. "And yet, having had the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Peterson, I feel sure that she couldn't be capable of this sort of thing. A girl with a face like hers isn't the kind to write such a note to any man except her husband."

"Shakespeare says—" began John Henry with a sigh.

"Hang Shakespeare!" Pollard interrupted roughly. "I don't care what he says. I tell you Mrs. Peterson couldn't have done this thing. There must be some mistake. Tell me the whole story, and we'll see if we can't get to the bottom of the mystery."

John Henry launched into a detailed account of what had happened to him since he had taken leave of his wife to go to his office.

"And you say that when that brown derby came rolling toward you and you picked it up, nobody appeared to claim it?"

John Henry nodded.

"Well, that is somewhat strange. Excuse me a minute, please, while I get police headquarters on the wire."

"Police headquarters!" gasped the other. "What do you intend to do?"

But, without replying, Pollard reached for the telephone on his desk.

"Hallo, Headquarters! This is the law-office of Mr. Peter Pollard. Have you had any ambulance case near the Flatiron Building between eight and nine this morning?"

There was a long wait, and then the lawyer, talking into the instrument, exclaimed: "You have, eh? Man knocked down by a cab at Twenty-Third Street at eight-forty-five. Taken to New York Hospital, eh? What was his name and address, please? Sam Barlow, Mills Hotel, No. 2. And what was his occupation? Telephone repair-man? Ever so much obliged, Headquarters. Good-by.

"We're getting on famously!" he exclaimed, turning to John Henry as he replaced the receiver on its hook. "That's probably where your brown hat came from, my boy. It belonged to Sam Barlow, telephone-wire repairer, and fell from his head when he was knocked down by the cab. That's why the poor fellow couldn't come to claim it."

"But I don't understand," protested John Henry, still in the dark.

"Don't you? I begin to understand more and more every minute. I think I already see the answer to the problem. What is the telephone number of your hotel?"

The puzzled John Henry gave him the desired information, and the lawyer immediately busied himself at the wire again.

"Hallo! Will you kindly tell me if you have had a man from the telephone company on the premises to fix your wires this morning? You have, eh? What floor did he work on, please? Tenth floor— Thanks. Good-by—

"I think you said that your rooms were on the tenth floor of the hotel, did you not?" he asked John Henry as he again "hung up." "And the rooms are in the front of the hotel, are they not? The windows overlook Madison Square? Just what I supposed. It's all as clear as day to me now.

"Your wife wrote that note, sure enough; but she didn't write it to the chimney-sweep—she wrote it to you. Listen and I'll explain how it all must have happened.

"After you had bid your wife good-by and left the hotel, she suddenly recollected something important she had to tell you. She ran to the window and saw you crossing Madison Square. She

did not know or had forgotten your business address, so she realized the necessity of getting into communication with you before you were out of sight."

"And you mean to say she wrote that note, put it in a derby hat, and threw it out of the window, trusting to the winds to carry it to me?" sneered John Henry incredulously.

"Not at all. Don't interrupt me, please. She ran out of her room and saw this fellow, Sam Barlow, repairing wires in the corridor. She requested him to come into her room, and took him to the window. 'You see that man walking across Madison Square?' she probably said to him. 'That's my husband. Do you think you could run after him and catch him?'

"The fellow thought that he could, so she dashed off a note to you—knowing that you were already late, and therefore not wishing to bring you back—and gave it to him to deliver. The telephone man put the note in the lining of his hat and started in pursuit of you. He had almost caught up with you near the Flatiron Building, when he was knocked down by a cab, and his hat went flying toward you. You had just turned a corner, and so knew nothing of the accident. That's how your wife's note came into your possession, my boy."

"And how do you know all this?" inquired the disconsolate John Henry, still doubting.

"I don't know it positively. I merely deduce it from the facts in our possession; but I am willing to bet my bottom dollar that it is the correct solution of the problem. As soon as you told me that nobody came forward to claim that derby, I knew right away that something must have happened to the owner. Then police headquarters informed me that the man knocked down near the Flatiron Building was a telephone repair-man, and your hotel people stated over the wire that a telephone repair-man had been at work on the tenth floor that morning. It was easy to guess the rest."

"But you are overlooking one important fact," protested John Henry, anxious to be convinced, but unable to rid himself of his doubt. "If your theory is correct, how do you account for the fact that this note is plainly addressed to that confounded chimney-sweep."

"Well, it isn't difficult to find an explanation for that," replied the lawyer. "I think you told me that you are only stopping temporarily at the hotel while the workmen are fixing up a home you have leased up in the Bronx. Are the chimneys of that house in good condition?"

"No," replied John Henry. "Now that you speak of it, I remember that the furnace man told me two weeks ago that the chimneys would have to be cleaned."

"Very good. Chimney-sweeps are hard to find in New York. Somebody must have recommended this Chauncey O'Brien to your wife, and she jotted down his name and address on a sheet of paper.

"In her hurry to write that note to you she seized that same sheet of paper from the table or desk, and unwittingly wrote the note on the reverse side. That, doubtless, is the explanation of that apparently suspicious circumstance.

"Now, go down-town to the general post-office, old man, and when you find Mrs. Peterson waiting for you there, apologize to her most abjectly for having been so idiotically base as to mistrust her."

An hour later, as John Henry entered the post-office building and walked down the corridor toward the big clock, his wife, attired in the neatest and most becoming of her honeymoon costumes, ran eagerly to meet him.

"Hallo, honey-boy!" she exclaimed. "So you did get my note, after all. I gave it to that telephone man to deliver, and when he didn't come back I was so afraid that he had not given it to you! I have something very important to tell you, dearest. I'll tell you all about it over lunch."

And as they left the post-office, her little gloved hand resting trustingly on his arm, John Henry heaved a sigh of relief.

"What a brute I was to doubt her!" he mused. "I ought to have known better. And what a mean trick I've played on poor Chauncey O'Brien, the chimney-sweep! I tremble to think what's going to happen to him when that ferocious wife of his gets hold of him."

# FROM FLAG TO FLAG.

By ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE,

Author of "With Sealed Lips," "On Glory's Trail," "Their Last Hope," etc.

An American's strange adventures in his own country during the War of 1812, with an account of a historic achievement under fire closely woven into the fabric of the story.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### A MAN AND A MAID.

DOWN the dust-white road leading from Baltimore, twelve miles away, bumped and clattered a big traveling-carriage. As it came abreast of the field where my regiment was encamped, it lurched to a standstill, and a plump white hand beckoned imperiously to a militia trooper who lounged at the road-side.

The fellow advanced, and I heard a woman's voice questioning him. An agony of bashfulness seemed to possess the country youth, and he stuttered forth incoherent answers that grew the more confused under her questions.

My own tent was pitched not far from the highway, and as I sat in its entrance, studying a map, the talk attracted my notice.

I put down my parchment and strolled across to the carriage. I was just in time to hear the militiaman protest:

"I—I don't know, ma'am. I just got here yesterday. I don't know where any of the other camps are."

"Is there *no* one of average intelligence to be found?" appealed the lady, addressing the universe at large.

"I have some few vain claims to it, madam," said I, coming up. "How can I serve you?"

The trooper, at sight of me, saluted and shuffled away, evidently glad to be quit of the inquisition. The lady turned to me, thrusting a somewhat shiny, dust-powdered countenance from the window.

"We are looking for General Stricker's headquarters, sir," she began. "Perhaps you can— Why, bless my soul, if it isn't Colonel Romney!"

She stared amazedly at my militia-colonel's uniform and at the added tan which long hours on the drill-ground had stamped on my face during the two weeks or so since we had last met, on the day Washington was sacked.

For, as I now saw, my fair interlocutor was Dorothy Winder's aunt, Mrs. Gaines. The sunlight in my eyes had at first blurred her features.

"Colonel Romney!" she repeated, surprised. And I thought I heard a soft rustle in the carriage behind her.

"Does it astonish you?" I asked. "I rode direct from Washington to General Stricker. In view of the help my previous experience could give me as a drill-master, he was so good as to appoint me acting lieutenant-colonel of cavalry. For the past fortnight we have been maneuvering hereabouts, and trying to lick into shape the new Pennsylvania and Maryland recruits that come pouring in every day."

"'Come pouring in'?" she echoed. "Why, it used to be hard to raise a single company. What is the magic of—"

"It is the spirit of '76, I think. And the burning of Washington awakened that spirit, just as Miss Winder once prophesied it would. All the way back to their ships the British were fired upon from behind fences and rocks and trees by farmers and villagers. It was Concord and Lexington over again. As soon as our scouts brought word, the other day, that nine thousand men, under Ross, and sixteen frigates, under Cockburn, were massing for a land-and-water attack on Baltimore, the whole country-side rushed to arms. Old men, boys, invalids. Every one who can carry a gun. Already we have three thousand encamped and—"

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"Is it really true?" she asked in consternation. "Are the British advancing again?"

"It is only too true. Nothing but these volunteers and the forts, McHenry and Covington, stand between them and Baltimore. If we fail to check them—"

But my last words were not heeded.

"They are advancing!" repeated Mrs. Gaines to her unseen companion. "Whatever shall we do now?"

"Can I help you?" I asked.

"Why, you see," she explained, "my brother, Dr. Beane, of Marlboro, was taken prisoner last week. Mr. Key went to Washington as soon as I told him of it, and got his excellency to add my brother's name to the list of prisoners to be exchanged. Mr. Key was to meet us at North Point this afternoon and go down the Patapsco in a schooner to the British fleet under flag of truce to arrange the transfer. He got permission to take us with him. My brother is ill, and I wanted to go to him in person. But if the fleet and army are on the march—"

"They will respect a flag of truce, no doubt," I replied, "even if they are preparing for battle. You'll be quite safe. Follow this road to the forks and then turn to the right. North Point lies only two miles beyond. How many are in your party?"

"Just we two. I and— Why, Dorothy, you haven't spoken to Colonel Romney! What a garrulous old woman I am, to be sure, to cackle so fast and not give you chance for a word!"

My heart stood still.

There was nothing in the least surprising in Dorothy's accompanying her aunt. Yet, somehow, I had not expected it. I still thought of her as I had left her — white and beautiful, among the honeysuckles on the moonlit porch of the Washington house.

So I stood—hat in hand, hesitating, confused—while a second face appeared at the open carriage window. Dorothy was paler than when last I had seen her. And her great eyes wore a tired, haggard look that went to my heart.

I bowed, scarce knowing what to say or do. But a woman, I think, always has better control of an embarrassing situation than has the wisest man.

"Let me congratulate you, Colonel Romney," said she in a level, unfaltering voice, "on your commission and on the service you are likely to see."

"Thank you," I mumbled, awkward as any schoolboy.

"Aunt Lucia," went on Dorothy, turning to Mrs. Gaines, "I'm afraid we are detaining Colonel Romney from his duties. Sha'n't we drive on?"

"Oh, *please* don't!" I begged, then checked myself.

Why should she not drive out of my life, this regal, gentle girl whom I had for a glorious second held close to my breast, then insulted and left? Why prolong her grief and my own? Yet, from my very soul that plea had come.

My unusual earnestness must have struck Mrs. Gaines, for she favored me with a glance of sharp scrutiny.

"Are you ill, Colonel Romney?" she inquired. "You are bronzed, but your face is much thinner and older than when I last saw you. You look as if you had suffered, or had a sickness. Perhaps—"

"I am quite well, thanks," I lied, quite myself again. "A touch of Chesapeake fever has pulled me down a bit. That is all. One has not time to be ill just now."

Dorothy's face, which had softened into a moment of anxiety, on her aunt's question, hardened at my careless reply.

"Wouldn't you like to see Colonel Romney's camp, dear?" queried Mrs. Gaines, the born matchmaker, laying her fat hand on her niece's arm. "I am tired, and I'll wait here for you. Do! It will be interesting. I'm sure he will be glad to show you everything. Won't you, colonel?"

I could not keep the gladness out of my eyes. Playing with fire, and worse than futile, as it would be, yet my whole nature craved to walk once more by this wonderful girl's side, to be alone with her, to hear her speak to me — to *me* alone.

"Won't you come?" I entreated, flinging open the door and holding out my hand to assist her to alight.

For an instant she shrank back. Then she seemed to read the agony of appeal in my look, and to be moved by it.

She must scorn me as the lowest black-

guard unhung. Yet, at my plea, a flush tinged her pale cheek, and, almost instinctively, she rose and placed her hand in mine.

I felt the dear fingers tremble ever so slightly. As though thinking better of her futile impulse of mercy, she hesitated once more, and again our eyes met. Hers were doubting, troubled; mine, I fear, told all that must never be spoken. It was a war of glances and of wills.

Her lips parted. What she was about to say, I never knew. Nor whether she or I had won that mute conflict. For McCrea—promoted lately through my intercession to a lieutenancy—bustled up, clicked his heels together in salute, and said to me:

"Courier from headquarters, sir! Personal despatches from the general commanding. I couldn't find your orderly, so I came myself. He's at your tent."

For the time, I could have consigned the excellent McCrea and the "general commanding" to the depths of the sea. But I mechanically replied to his salute. Then I turned to say good-by to Dorothy.

She had quite recovered her self-control, and was once more the pleasantly oblivious, formal acquaintance.

"Good-by, colonel," she said. "May we both wish you every success in the coming campaign?"

She gave the coachman an order. Leaving me standing uncovered, and with dejectedly hanging head, she moved—as I believed—forever out of my life.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### M'CREA PAYS HIS DEBT.

*"Father and I, we went to camp*
*Along with Captain Gooden.*
*And there we saw the men and boys*
*As thick as hasty-puddin'.*
*Yankee Doodle, keep it up!*
*Yankee—"*

THE song, swelling discordant, thunderous, triumphant, from thousands of throats, to the rhythmic tread of myriad feet, broke off in a mighty "huzza!"

For General Stricker, his bald pate shining in the glare of September sunlight, his saber waving encouragement, galloped, shouting, across the front of the marching army.

"In another ten minutes, boys!" he bawled, as he passed to the farther wing of our little host.

And ever, as he rode, that long, ringing cheer followed him.

Seasoned campaigner as I was, my pulse beat higher at the whirlwind of enthusiasm, and I sat my horse with greater pride than even when I had led my machine-like Peninsular veterans on to their invincible course through Bonaparte's French legions.

I looked about me. Even the sight that met my gaze could not dampen that glow of patriotism. Though, truth to tell, there was more in our outward aspect to excite a veteran's derision than his delight.

Three thousand strong—or weak!—we were. But chiefly militia and, to a large extent, men who never before had seen battle nor a month of drill.

Men were there whose shoulders were bent, whose gnarled, twisted fingers could scarce handle the heavy muskets, blunderbusses, or old-fashioned fowling-pieces they carried; dotards, whose palsied heads bore the snows of ninety winters. Lads I saw, not yet in their teens, their round, childish faces alight with the jolly adventure whereon they were entering. Consumptives, cripples, sick men—all were to be found in our lines.

Every sort of weapon, from regulation musket to scythe, was on view. Every costume, too, from my own spruce cavalry uniform down to some shambling mountaineer recruit's ragged homespun. Every manner of steed, from Arab charger to spavined plow horse.

Fewer in numbers by half, and infinitely poorer in equipment and training, than had been Winder's army at Bladensburg, there was yet about us a confident resolution, a certainty of success, a flamboyant patriotism, that lifted us head and shoulders above those ill-starred defenders of Washington.

The spirit of '76 was blazing broadcast. These motley fighters marched, singing and cheering, into a battle against fearful odds, even as had their fathers at Bunker Hill and Trenton. And I—veteran of the Napoleonic wars—was proud to be with them.

Thus we marched — singing "Yankee

Doodle" in a dozen different keys and cheering ourselves hoarse — until we reached the line of rude earthworks hastily thrown up the night before by General Sam Smyth's handful of troops, on news of the British intention to land next day off North Point.

The "Point" ran out into the Patapsco River. Its upper reaches, or "neck," was furrowed by our rough defenses. Below, the British were already swarming ashore from their transports.

It was Ross's plan to march his land force of nine thousand over the twelve-mile road that led to Baltimore, and to wreck that city as he had Washington. Cockburn, sailing up the Patapsco, was to cooperate with him.

Reinforced as they now were, this was to be no mere fly-by-night raid, but a determined occupation of the Maryland metropolis. Thence, with Baltimore as base of operations, a foothold would be gained that might stretch to Philadelphia or to New York itself. Great Britain's grip would then be fairly on the helpless throat of our country.

And we—three thousand undisciplined, ill-armed rustics—alone stood in the way of that wholesale conquest.

Too weak numerically to prevent the landing of the British, we yet manned our shallow trenches, every man of us determined that the chief invasion of all the War of 1812 should not pass our ragged lines.

As our foe—outnumbering us three to one—formed line of battle, an old man in a gray suit and broad-leafed hat ran up to where my regiment was posted. Peering eagerly into the dismounted troopers' faces, he called tremulously:

"Nathanael! Nathanael!"

McCrea caught sight of the old fellow, and left his place to run forward and greet him with affectionate concern.

"Father!" he cried, "you don't mean to say you've come to enlist? And you a devout Quaker!"

"Son," returned the old man with dignity, "thee knows I came not to take part in this unseemly brawl. Does not our creed command us: 'Smite not'? War is sinful, and is bred of Satan. I come to tell thee that thee hast my prayers for thy safety, and my earnest hope that thee will see the error of thy ways and turn from thoughts of bloodshed to peace."

"Gladly, father," gently replied McCrea, scowling over his shoulder at the grinning troopers behind him, "gladly. As soon as the war is over. And now let me get you to the rear, for there will be a charge as soon as those redcoats get their formation. Keep safe and—thank you for coming to see me again!"

He pressed the old man's hands, then guided him toward the rear. Only once did he pause. Then it was to give one last word of admonition.

"Nathanael," said he, "I know full well 'tis for country and flag thee fights. For that reason I cannot wholly condemn thee. To smite is sinful, and is prompted of Satan. Yet, O my son, Nathanael, the spirit moves me to give thee this one last counsel: Smite not, if thee can overcome the temptation to punish thy country's foes. But, if Satan *compels* thee to smite, then smite *hard,* son Nathanael! *Smite hard!*"

The blare of British bugles sounding the charge drowned the laugh that ran along our vanguard at this human-nature sophistry of the old apostle of peace. The redcoats moved forward at the double-quick. A shower of shot and shell from their transports and shore batteries rained in upon us. Our own little clump of cannon replied valiantly.

The battle was on. The battle that was to decide a nation's fate.

Perhaps to you, who know little and care less for war, the tale of a battle may grow wearisome in the telling. So I will touch but lightly on this one.

The redcoats rolled like some mighty scarlet wave straight up against our earthworks. Then, like a wave, again they broke and surged back, followed by a leaden hail from our trenches.

*"Yankee Doodle, keep it up!"* sang the embattled militia, even as their fathers in Revolution days had sung the song which contemptuous British wits had originally devised for the ridicule of their American colonists.

Again and again charged the red line, and ever we smashed their formation and sent them tumbling helter-skelter back upon their reserves. Such defense, at Bladensburg, would easily have saved Washington.

A charge at last, with a stalwart, white-periwigged horseman at its head! Ross was leading his troops in person. And his presence before them lent new valor and strength to the oncoming hosts.

Our volleys crashed into their ranks again and again with murderous force and accuracy. Lesser opposition had beaten them back more than once. But now, with that stern figure at their head, it seemed that nothing could stay them.

Straight up to our breastworks they came, while we tore huge gaps in their line, but could not check them. Men and horses fell by the score. Still, the rest hurled themselves onward. Up to the first line of earthworks — and *over* them!

This was the moment when, had we been regulars, we should probably have retreated, realizing that our defenses were carried. But, being for the most part raw recruits, our men knew nothing of the sort, and stood their ground, bayoneting or clubbing as many as possible of their onrushing enemies.

The space just inside the first line of trenches thus became the scene of a hand-to-hand struggle almost approaching in confusion the mêlée on Bladensburg bridge.

Then it was that I—for it was over my regiment's part of the wall their center had broken — found myself face to face with Ross himself as he slid down the low fortifications in the midst of his swarming adherents.

With Ross down or captured, the advance must become a retreat. With Ross still at their head, his men, by sheer force of numbers, bade fair to beat us back to the open plain behind, where we would speedily be hemmed in and at their mercy.

On the happenings of the next sixty seconds rested victory or complete surrender. With this in mind, I leaped upon Ross, sword in hand, and engaged him in single combat. My men rallied at sight of our duel, and momentarily checked the redcoats' advance.

I had but a second or two of time, and I knew it. Yet, every drop of blood in me cried out against slaying this man on whose staff I had once served—by whose side I had fought on a dozen Spanish battle-fields.

I was the better swordsman. In fact, few could cross sabers successfully with me in my prime. I knew I had skill to cut Ross down. And yet—I could not.

But what was to be done must be done at once. Every second was worth a thousand men. And suddenly I found the solution to the difficulty.

Ross had recognized me on the instant. But he was apparently controlled by none of the scruples that held back my own sword-arm. He attacked me with a wild rage that more than once almost broke down my guard.

Then I put my plan into execution.

I stepped back. He lunged. I sent my blade running along his, in the parry, with a sweep that ended in a sharp twist, an old trick learned in boyhood from an Italian fencing-master. Unprepared for the move as he was, it tore his sword out of his hand as though I had wrenched it away by bodily force.

"Back!" I shouted to the redcoats as I put my saber-point to their disarmed general's throat. "Back, all, or I'll strike!"

The red line halted in doubt.

"Surrender, General Ross!" I ordered. "Surrender! Give me your parole."

His arms sank to his sides in resignation. Accordingly, I lowered my sword-point to the earth.

As I did so, he snatched a pistol from his belt. Shouting, "This is how England surrenders to traitors!" he fired pointblank at my head.

The range seemed too close by far to admit of missing. Yet, even as he fired, Ross lurched backward, his arm flew up, and the ball whistled harmless over my head.

A man beside me had fired at the same instant—or, rather, a fraction of an instant sooner — and Ross collapsed, stone-dead, to the ground.

My regiment shouted and sprang forward at their disheartened foes. Ross being down, his men had no heart for further attack. Back over the rampart they were driven, and once more the trenches were ours. For the time, danger of assault was over.

Then it was that McCrea, still clutching his smoking pistol, spoke in my ear.

"I said I was your man, didn't I?" he drawled in that quiet, countrified

voice of his. "And I said I'd always be at your elbow. Well, I *was*. And it's lucky I had my pistol in hand before Ross drew his. I guess my debt to you is about wiped out, ain't it?"

"It was *you* who shot him?" I cried, stretching out my hand in gratitude.

"'Tisn't every man that gets to shoot a real live major-general," he grinned. "And he's likely to be my last. The debt—the debt's wiped out—and—"

With no change in his leathery face or drawling voice, McCrea quietly fell dead across my feet.

When the British had first swarmed into the trenches a rifle-ball had pierced the man's chest, going quite through his body. He had lived long enough thereafter to save me; and had died on his feet, fighting, grim, surly, to the last.

Thus did Lieutenant Nathanael McCrea pay his life-debt.

The British rallied and came back to the assault. Once more, urged on by their officers, they made their way, inch by inch, to the barricade. Again we fought them hand to hand. It was an indiscriminate tumult of shots, bayonet lunges, and sword flashes.

The chief defense and attack centered where I and my regiment were posted. As leader of that section of the defenders, I quickly became a target for sharpshooters. A ball carried away my hat. A second grazed my shoulder.

Fifty multicolored lights leaped before me, and I sank pleasantly to sleep.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### IN STRANGE COMPANY.

"You see," the man was arguing, "we beat 'em. We made 'em retire. We drove 'em clean back from their trenches. An' yet, 'ere *we* are, retreatin'. 'Ow's that to be explained? Jest tell me that, will yer? We lands, and we starts for Baltimore to treat it to a visit like we done to Wash'n'ton. We finds the Yankees entrenched. They kills Ross—rest 'is soul!—an' they 'olds us orf fer three 'ole hours. Then they gets out of am'nition an' falls back, gentle an' careless-like. An' so does we. An' now its orf to our ships, an' th' invasion's over. 'Ow's that?"

"It's this way," spoke up a second Cockney voice. "It's like this, sergeant. We was too weak an' too badly crumpled up to foller our advantage. So we comes pilin' back. An', as you say, th' invasion's over."

"Any fool could see that!" retorted the sergeant. "But 'twas a *vict'ry*. An' if 'twas a vict'ry, w'y don't we push on to Baltimore?"

"Because a few sech 'vict'ries' would leave ol' King George without a soljer left in Hamerica. That's w'y. We carried the trenches, but we was licked fer all that, an'—"

"An' if we'd carried them same trenches as ork'ard as you sweeps is carryin' Colonel Romney," insisted the sergeant in fine irony, "we'd 'a' been licked afore we started. Easy with 'im, there, you gawks! 'E ain't a sack of straw."

"No," sneered one of the others; "'e's a bloomin' sight worse. 'E's a turncoat. That's wot 'e is."

"If you'll do me the favor of repeatin' them words back of the barracks when we gets to camp," politely retorted the sergeant, "I'll 'ave the reel pleasure of 'ammerin' your 'ead off. Colonel Romney's no more a turncoat than you are. 'E's a Hamerican, ain't 'e? And ain't 'e got a right to fight for 'is own flag? Jest answer me that."

No one *did* answer, and he resumed.

"I've knowed the colonel over ten year, an' fought under 'im many's the time. An' I ain't goin' to see 'im lugged off to no prison-'ulks to rot or starve. That's w'y I made you lads pick 'im up, w'en I comes acrost him under the trenches after the fight, an' bring 'im along wi' us, afore the provost's men could go over the wounded. Once we get 'im to quarters, I'll put 'im in with them three p'litical pris'ners that's to be shipped out to-night to Cockburn. Him an' th' admiral's pals. Cockburn'll see he gets away safe. Easy over that log, now! Break step!"

Then it was that I ceased to listen to the talk in a dreamingly impersonal fashion, and opened my eyes.

I was lying at full length on a field-stretcher, borne by four soldiers. Alongside my improvised litter strutted my old Peninsular orderly, Simmons, now

arrayed in the dignity of very new sergeant's stripes.

I took in everything with perfect clearness. My head did not so much as ache. Nor was I sensible of any wound.

"Hallo, Simmons!" I remarked, sitting up. "Where are we now?"

The litter stopped, and the sergeant bustled to my side.

"All right again, sir?" he queried. "I couldn't find no wound or bruise on you. Concussion of one of them newfangled shells of our'n, I guess. I saw you a fightin', not twenty foot away from me. Then a shell burst right above your 'ead, an' down you went. Not a scratch, even! Just concussion. I've seed it lay a man out for a good two hours, an' then seed 'im git up as good as new."

"You—some one—said the battle is over," I suggested.

"All over. Yankees fallin' back to their camp, an' us to ours. Our part of the shindy's over. Its for Cockburn—beg pardon, sir, I mean *Admiral* Cockburn—to pass the forts with them sixteen heavy gun frigates of his'n, an' batter Balt'more to pieces from the river. *We* can't give 'im no more 'elp. But th' admiral will do it easy enough. 'E starts to-night. An' you with 'im, sir, I now s'pose."

"I?"

"Yessir. I'm takin' th' liberty of shippin' you out to 'im with three p'litical pris'ners. You'll make it all right with him about it, sir, won't you, an' see I don't get into trouble?"

I promised to make his peace with Cockburn. In addition, I emptied my pockets of their little pile of gold and silver and forced it into his reluctant hand.

We had reached the shore, and I clambered out of the litter and stood on my feet. Beyond a slight shakiness, I was almost my old self again.

Fifteen minutes later I was in the stern of a long-boat which eight seamen were rowing to the British frigate Surprise, in the outer stream. Beside me sat three Americans in civilian dress who were held by the British on some technical political charge, and thus were not included in the harsh treatment accorded military prisoners.

Indeed, I learned there were several such captives on the Surprise.

Dusk was settling. Through the twilight I could see the dim bulk and twinkling lights of the powerful invading fleet. When I remembered that no barrier, save the decrepit Fort Covington and the nearer Fort McHenry, lay betwixt this mighty armament and Baltimore, my heart sickened.

It seemed, all at once, as if our gallant defense of North Point had been worse than futile.

What profited it that we had stemmed the land invasion if Baltimore were to be crushed beneath the big guns of these sixteen ships-of-war? Truly, the odds against our country were unduly heavy!

We came alongside the Surprise. The rowers shipped their oars, a ladder was run down to us, and we clambered aboard.

A large cabin, aft, had been set aside for the captives' use. Thither we were conducted. I made for one of the bunks ranging along the wall, flung myself down upon it, and in a minute was sound asleep.

We had been on the march long before dawn. For hours I had fought, and it was now nightfall. I had earned my rest. It was the first unbroken sleep I had enjoyed for weeks.

Miserable, worried, discouraged as I was, Nature clamored for her due of repose. So, like a drugged man, I slept the clock around.

It was broad daylight when I awoke. I sprang to my feet, bewildered. Sprang up, only to be tossed back into my berth again as, with a swift lurch, the ship came about. So! We were under way, then. Bound for Baltimore!

I fancied the first motions of the frigate had wakened me, and that we must be just leaving our anchorage at North Point. So, waiting only to wash, and to munch a handful of the ship-biscuits and slices of dried meat that were piled on a plate on the table, I made my way to the deck.

Somewhat to my surprise, no one barred my passage. In fact, we political prisoners were made as free of every inch of the vessel as were the officers themselves.

I reached the rail and looked out on

the distant shore. No sign of North Point, or of any of its surrounding country. While I slept, we had traveled many miles up-stream.

I saw some of my fellow prisoners chatting in groups about the after-deck, but was in no mood to join them. Sitting down on a coil of rope, I fell to watching the waters and the far-off banks, and to speculating whether or not the fort would make the rash attempt to bar our progress. Remembering their scanty resources and weak defense, I half decided that we would not so much as halt as we swept by in our onward rush toward the doomed city.

I was fated, it seemed, to witness my fatherland's worst disasters. Baltimore once taken, the enemy's further conquest would be ridiculously easy. The freedom our fathers had won with their life-blood would become a mockery. Thus I sat an interminable time, moodily brooding.

A change in the sailing course drew my notice. Hitherto, we had moved in single file. Now the sixteen ships maneuvered into regular battle formation. We must be nearing the forts.

A bend in the narrowing river. A low fortress perched almost on the water's edge, the Stars and Stripes flying above its walls—Fort McHenry. Farther ahead rose the lesser walls of Fort Covington.

A crash from the foremost frigate's bow gun. The fleet had opened fire!

A second crash. Then two frigates swung about, and with a deafening roar hurled in full broadsides.

Some of the shot whistled high above the waves, following a true course to their mark. Others bounded and ricochetted over the water like the flat stones that country boys "skip" across millponds. Shells, too, now and then rattled noisily through the air and fell, plump! into the river, raising man-high pyramids of snow-white foam, or sending up a whirling cascade of spray.

From Fort McHenry now broke out an answering volley. The gun-ports flashed and sputtered like a series of toy crackers. Covington, farther away, and less exposed to the fleet's fire, followed suit in somewhat less emphatic fashion. So did a line of connecting batteries.

It was clear the little forts were going to dispute vehemently, even if uselessly, the passage of their stronger foe. And it did me good to see the valiant show of defense.

All afternoon the bombardment dragged on. Fort McHenry, being nearest, suffered the brunt of this. Also, her guns were mainly short-distance carronades, and could make little effective retort. The fleet hung in the offing, striving to batter the fort to submission at long range. It seemed impossible the defenders could hold out long under such fearful onslaught.

It was nearly sunset when, as I sat on my rope-coil, I heard one passing officer say to another:

"The admiral's found this a tougher nut to crack than he imagined. I hear he's given orders for a large shore party to be landed as soon as it's dark, to get around behind McHenry's defenses and smash them under cross-fire. That ought to settle them before midnight."

"And then Baltimore! And even better pickings than we found in Washington!" laughed his companion. "It's odd, though, how the fellows fight. They could hardly be pluckier if they were English."

The two moved on out of earshot. But they had given me an inspiration.

I had abstractedly noted, ever since morning, that messengers would occasionally rush to the chart-house, bearing orders from Cockburn, who had spent the day in the foretop rigging of the Surprise. These orders were bawled through the half-open door in the high-pitched "sing-song" so prevalent in both the army and navy of England.

The officer on duty inside would rig signal flags accordingly and hand them out to a seaman, who took the flags to the signal ropes, ran them up, and thus flashed the commands to the other vessels of the squadron.

In fact, the seaman on duty at the door had but a few minutes earlier departed with a set of such signals. In a trice I was on my feet.

Slipping around to the side of the chart-room, just out of view of the busy officer within, I sang out, copying easily the droning intonation with which long years of custom had made me familiar:

"*Set signal: Shore party, twelve hundred strong, land at nightfall to attack fort from rear!*"

Then I was back again on my rope-coil, barely in time to dodge the returning signal sailor.

I sat waiting during a period that seemed interminable. Suppose the signal officer had detected a false note in my voice? Suppose he had realized how mad a thing it was to set such a signal as I had dictated?

Could he be so stupid as not to know that every spyglass in the fort would be trained on those signal flags as they were hauled aloft? That each would be read by the defenders, from their code-book, as quickly and as accurately as by the commanders of the other ships?

In fact, that the Surprise herself would be the only frigate in the fleet from which the signals would not be at once read?

But discipline aboard ship is cast-iron in its firmness. On this I relied. Had the signal officer received the orders: "Blow up every ship at once!" he probably would have set the flags accordingly.

Nor was I mistaken in my estimation. In a minute he handed out a new ball of flags to the seaman. And by the sunset light the defenders read—and took the needful precautions.

So it was that I, as prisoner, did my country greater service than ever I had in field of battle.

I was still chuckling over my success, when a surprised voice called my name. I looked up to see Key standing before me.

"What under Heaven brings *you* here, old friend?" he cried, glancing at my militia uniform.

Much as I owed to this man, much as my every instinct taught me to like him, it was all I could do to be civil. He had won all I had lost. If I owed him my life, he owed to me the fact he was still betrothed to Dorothy Winder.

As poor McCrea would have said: "I guess the debt's wiped out."

I answered him as briefly as might be.

"I'm here as Mr. Madison's commissioner," said he, when I had finished my story. "I have charge of all arrangements for the exchange of certain political prisoners. But Cockburn holds us aboard here until the battle is over and Baltimore is reached. So we have the misery of watching our brave forts destroyed. But, oh, how pluckily McHenry is holding out! I've watched the flag floating so proudly above it all day. Will it be there at dawn? Or will the fort be a heap of ruins—and the path to Baltimore unguarded?"

"Who can say?" I shrugged, turning away.

But he was at my side again before I had taken a step.

"By the way!" he exclaimed, drawing a letter from his pocket, "I almost forgot. I dined with his excellency and Mrs. Madison four nights ago. Mrs. Madison asked a monstrous number of questions about you. When I told her I had heard you were on duty with Stricker's force, and that I was to stop at his headquarters on my way to the British fleet, she ran to her escritoire, scribbled a few lines, and bade me find you and give you the letter. She babbled some mysterious nonsense about having barred you long enough from the joys of Parad—"

"I can't stay in my cabin any longer," interrupted a voice as a woman's form emerged from the companionway and moved across to Key. "Aunt Lucia is better, and it is *so* stuffy down there. One of the officers says this ship is far out of range of the fort's fire, and that there's no danger. So I've come up to—"

The speaker paused abruptly on sight of me. And thus, for a second of confused silence, Dorothy and I faced each other.

Then, thrusting Mrs. Madison's unopened letter into my coat, I doffed my hat and bowed without speaking.

Had she been alone, I would have welcomed the meeting with unspeakable delight. But it was like a knife-thrust to see Key and herself standing there together.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE IMMORTAL VERSE.

DAWN—pallid and dim—crept over the waters.

All night had we three stood by the

rail, almost wholly silent, watching the streaks of red light from signal-rockets whose blaze split the darkness as with a sword. All night had the boom of guns from ship to ship reverberated in our ears. And we had strained every faculty to catch the dull, answering roar from the fort.

Once a deathly silence had followed the fleet's volleys, and we had listened, breathless, for any reply from McHenry. The silence lengthened.

"Have they struck their colors?" whispered Dorothy with something very like a sob.

As if in answer to her words, a bomb trailed through the night sky from the direction of the beleaguered fort and burst in a thousand flashes of light far above the squadron.

"No!" cried Key in triumph. "The flag is still there!"

Shortly after midnight the distant crackle of musketry had sounded angrily through the stillness. A few rapid cannon-volleys followed. All these from somewhere behind the fort on the landward side.

"A shore attack!" muttered Key. "That was the meaning of the boats we saw the Surprise and some of the nearer frigates lowering, early in the evening. If it should succeed!"

Again McHenry's gun-ports belched a line of living flame, and the air shook with the report.

"The flag is still there!" answered Dorothy, using his own words in glad rejoinder.

"As far as the shore party is concerned," I put in, speaking for nearly the first time, "the flag is likely to stay there for some centuries. I fancy Commander Armistead was ready for them."

And I told them what I had done to warn the fort.

As I finished, Dorothy's soft hand was laid in quick, involuntary praise upon my own. The light touch went through me agonizingly, and, even as she withdrew her hand in sudden remembrance of our relative positions, I moved away slightly, glancing at Key as I did so.

He had evidently noted her impulsive gesture, yet his handsome face showed no displeasure. Whereat I wondered.

It may have been an hour or so later that the splash of oars betokened the return of the shore party. As such survivors of it as belonged to the Surprise clambered aboard near where we stood, we could hear, amid muttered curses, such detached phrases as:

"Yes, they were ready for us—"

"We walked straight into the trap—"

"The miserable Yankees heated round-shot till it was red-hot and fired it into our platoon."

And so the night dragged on. As gray dawn appeared, ship after ship slackened fire. And now we listened in vain for sounds from the fort.

All along shore was as still as death. A light mist overhung the water, blotting out every glimpse of land.

"It's all over," said Key, "one way or another. Either Cockburn has given up his attempt at passing the fort, or—what is much more likely—the garrison have surrendered."

"After such a gallant defense? All day and all night!" exclaimed Dorothy. "Oh, they *wouldn't!*"

"Their fort may be razed to the ground by this time," gloomily returned Key. "If so, America's liberties are in greater danger than ever they were in Revolutionary days. Baltimore must fall. And then—"

A swirl of wind blew the words from his lips and sent the soft strands of loose hair flying about Dorothy's face. The same zephyr cut the water mists as one might scatter the smoke of a cigar.

In the struggling dawnlight the low, dark fort stood out clear against the paler background of sky. And, like a splash of vivid autumn color in a dull pine-wood, the Stars and Stripes fluttered lazily from the flagstaff.

The relief was too great. Key and I seized each other's shoulders and capered about the deck together like drunken sailors.

Forgot, for the second, was my bitterness, my insensate black jealousy. I knew but one thing—the flag of my country still floated victorious. The bombardment had failed. The flag was still there!

Dorothy, in the mighty reaction, had sunk down and buried her face in her hands, her slender figure shaken with sobs.

"Oh, the splendid, *splendid* flag!" she wept in ecstasy. "The beautiful star-spangled banner! I love it so!"

Key, at sound of her weeping, came to himself, as did I.

"Hush!" he comforted the girl. "This is no time for tears. You have seen the most glorious sight this country's day ever dawned on—the 'star-spangled banner,' as you call it! It has triumphed once more. The fatherland is safe! Safe, thanks to the star-spangled banner!"

"Long may it wave!" I added. "It floats to-day over a land of brave people who will forever be free."

Key caught at my boastful words, repeating them softly to himself. Then he began to pace the deck, muttering disconnected sentences under his breath.

"Oh, for a sheet of paper and a crayon, while the mood is on me!" I heard him murmur.

Without clearly following his idea, but moved by the passionate earnestness in his voice, I mechanically began to search my pockets. In one I readily found a pencil-stub I had used in map-marking. Then my fingers closed on a letter.

"Will these do?" I asked as he passed me once more in that restless, muttering walk of his.

He snatched the paper and pencil almost rudely, with a bare word of thanks. It was not until I saw him rip open the letter and begin to scribble feverishly in tiny, neat characters on the blank side of it, that I realized it was the missive he had given me from Mrs. Madison, and which I, in the excitement of the moment, had put aside unopened.

Still, I cared little, even were he to blot out its message with his scribblings. I felt scant interest in Dolly Madison, for I could not forget it was she who had first shown me the closed gate of happiness, that night at the Gaines mansion, when she took so mocking a delight in telling me of Dorothy's betrothal to Key.

I turned now to glance at Dorothy. Her eyes were upon Key, but in what seemed to me curiosity rather than love. I stepped toward the busily writing man, but she checked me by a gesture.

"*Don't!*" she whispered. "He is writing. One word might break the inspiration. And his poems are usually too good to be spoiled by an untimely breaking-off of his thoughts. He—"

"I have it!" exclaimed Key, springing up and coming toward us, his gay face fairly glowing, his hand atremble. "I *have* it! The first stanza. The rest will follow easily. 'Twas only the first I doubted for. Will you listen?"

And in that wondrous, melodious, deep voice of his, he began to read what he had scrawled on the back of my letter:

*Oh, say, can you see by the dawn's early light*
*What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?*
*Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight*
*O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming?*
*And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,*
*Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there!*
*Oh, say, does the star-spangled banner still wave*
*O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?*

He paused. Dorothy and I, with a single breath, cried out in admiration.

"It is genius!" I said briefly as we grew more coherent.

"It is more!" Dorothy asserted. "It is patriotism! It strikes the keynote of love and pride in the fatherland. It will live when we are forgotten. Yes, and when this night's battle is scarce recalled to memory."

"You are right," I assented. "I believe that the battle will live in men's minds because of the poem. Not the poem because of the battle. What shall you call it?"

Key seemed scarcely to have heard our plaudits. Now, at my question, he had roused himself.

"I shall give Miss Winder the naming of it, if she will do me the honor," said he. "It was her chance phrase of the 'star-spangled banner' that gave birth to the idea. What shall it be, Miss Dorothy?"

"Why not call it just that—'The Star-Spangled Banner'?" she suggested timidly. "It has a good, poetic sound. *'The Star-Spangled Banner, by Francis Scott Key,'*" she added, giving him his

full name, with mock deference, in declaiming the title.

"And," she continued excitedly, "do you know you've unconsciously chosen the meter of 'Anacreon in Heaven'? Your song will go better to that grand air than to any other. Listen."

She hummed a bar of the martial tune to the first line of Key's poem. Words and music seemed indissolubly made for each other.

"So be it," said Key. "You have christened my verse."

"No," she contradicted with pretty wilfulness, "it has been christened in the blood of heroes. And it will live in the hearts of their children's children! I prophesy it!"

"With all my heart, I thank you," responded the poet. "I am already repaid, even if the kind forecast fail to come true. But, Romney," he added in a more commonplace tone, "I'm afraid I've spoiled your letter. Had you any further use for it?"

"None, especially," said I. "It is the one you gave me last night from Mrs. Madison. Nothing important, I fancy."

"You 'fancy'?" echoed Key. "Do you mean you hadn't read it?"

"Scarcely," I retorted, "since you just now broke the seal."

"Oh, a thousand pardons!" he cried, full of remorse. "What a boor I am! I trust you'll forgive my rudeness. I—"

"It's of no consequence at all," I cut him short, accepting the missive from him.

"After you've read the letter," interposed Dorothy, "may I read the verse on the back of it once more?"

"Certainly," I answered. "Read it now, if you will. The lettle can wait," I went on, in answer to her protest. "It has waited long, and a little further delay will scarce cool its tidings. Besides, I'd like to hear the verse again. Won't you please read it aloud?"

I handed her the letter. She began:

"'I have kept you in suspense far too long, you silly boy!'"

Then she paused, colored, and looked so pathetically confused that Key broke out laughing.

"I think," he chuckled, "the tidings may not be so cold, after all—if one may judge from the start! Perhaps it might be well to read it?"

"I—I'm sorry," protested Dorothy, giving the sheet of paper back to me, "I got the wrong side of the page."

"So I perceive," I answered dryly.

I took the wretched letter—angry at my own share in the foolish mistake—and glanced idly at the dainty chirography of the president's wife. In morbid fear lest the others think from the opening line that the flighty little woman and I were carrying on some senseless, innocuous flirtation, I read aloud, scarce noting at first the sense of the words:

> I have kept you in suspense far too long, you silly boy. I promised I would tell you great news one week from the night I talked with you at the Gaines dinner-party. But one week from then—where were we all? So I have had to let your punishment last till I could get word to you. Though, on my faith, you deserved to suffer, for breathing sweet nothings to one woman, while you looked love with all your soul at another. Do you blame me for avenging myself? But I generously forgive you! In token of which, I do hereby affirm most solemnly that Frank Key and Dorothy Winder are not—have never been—and are never likely to be—betrothed. I only—

The paper fluttered to the deck. Dazed, reeling under the wonder of my sudden happiness, I rushed toward Dorothy, scarce noting Key's look of comic bewilderment.

"*Dorothy!*" I cried.

From ship to ship, through the hush of early morning, rang the bugle-calls, sounding the retreat. The invasion was over. Baltimore was saved. The liberties of the country were preserved. England's hopes of American conquest were forever crushed.

At my feet, scrawled on the back of a letter, lay a poem that was to become immortal.

But did *I* give heed to any of these petty trifles? Not I! I had greater, far more marvelous—glorious—immortal—things to think of—

Dorothy Winder was in my arms!

THE END.

# A PAIR AND A PARROT.

By ROBERT CARLTON BROWN.

**The tale of a parsimonious farmer, his long-suffering wife, and a bird of promise, to say nothing of the dog.**

"A PARRET! Not if I know it. It's bad 'nough tuh hev *you,* let alone a parret," growled Bill Brown.

"*William!*" cried his wife, emphasizing her ejaculation with a waggle of her bony forefinger. "I weren't brought up with no sech folks as you. My father was a gentleman; an', what's more, I won't allow no sech aspirations on my character. I guess ef I do talk it's to the point."

"Yes, an' the point's a circle," allowed her husband.

"*William!*" Again the housewife fixed her husband with a savage eye. "Whenever I presume to say anything you start on one of your everlastin' tirades, an' you don't say nothing at all. Even if I do talk a leetle now an' then, when I'm riled, it ain't sufficient cause for you to address your lawfully married wife in such degrading terms. I guess I've been about as good a wife to you as anybody."

"Yes. That's right, Mary," admitted Brown. "I ain't never had but one, praise be!"

"*William!*" This time the voice was shrill. "Just for that I'll get the parret. I need some *intelligent* company. Somebody thet I can talk to thet won't answer me back with no such sass as you do, thinking that you're real facetious when you do so."

"No; the parret'll swear at ye," offered Bill Brown.

"Yes, ef you teach him. But mark my words, William, I'm going to get that parret, and to-day, too. There's only three of them left, and Mrs. Evans she got one, so why not me?"

"Well, as I said, there's one in the fam'ly already, an' I 'low as that's 'bout enough."

"*William!*" Mary Brown screamed his name this time, and at the same moment rushed to a little closet to pull out a rusty bonnet, sacred to the occasional trips she took to town.

"I guess I can hev a parret's long's you've got that old dog Pop," she muttered, jabbing the pins into her modest hat vindictively.

"Pop's a dorg. Thet's diffrunt," protested the farmer. "Besides, he's useful. He's a watch-dorg—thet's what he is."

"Well, I ain't makin' no claims fer my parret, but you ken jest bet she'll be nothin' but a ornament, an' I'm goin' to get her now."

"Well, ef ye do, I'll kill the dog-darn bird; an' then, I suppose, you'll wear it on your hat."

"I won't do no sech thing. I ain't given to them barbarous practises. I'm goin' to hev thet parret fer company—thet's what."

Bill Brown didn't answer. He was a selfish utilitarian. "The greatest good to the greatest number" was his slogan, and he considered himself the greatest number.

An abhorrence for things ornamental had possessed him since early youth. That was why he had married a plain woman that could do the work. That was why he bought the dog Pop, so that his house would be safe from marauders.

Everything in Brown's house had a place, and a particular use. There was nothing unnecessary. And now to think that the woman's vanity had broken a lifelong principle of the little household!

Bill was in despair. He knew that the bird could be put to no possible use, and he hated to see the money go to satisfy a whim of Mary's.

"William, are you goin' to hev the decency to hitch up the sorrel for me? I hev to drive her sence you put Betty out to work on thet thrasher. A pity to put a good drivin' horse like her on farm work."

"She's got to earn her keep," growled Bill. "She was jest becomin' a pleasure horse, from you drivin' her round most the time, an' I want you to understand there ain't no pleasure business on this here farm."

"I've noticed thet before," his wife replied. "But are you goin' to hitch up the sorrel for me, William?"

"No," he grunted, picking up the weekly paper and turning his back on her.

Without a word of remonstrance, Mrs. Brown bustled through the door, out to the barn, and harnessed the horse herself. Then she set off at a jog-trot for town—and the parrot.

Bill Brown sat alone in the little kitchen, talking to his dog Pop, who had come close and lay looking up into the farmer's eyes.

"Pop, the old woman's goin' to hev a parret. I reckon we'll pester the life out of that bird somé. Either Mary or the bird has got to be taught that this here house is for work, not play. There ain't goin' to be no lazy bird eatin' its head off in fodder ef I can help it, an' I guess I can.

"Ef the bird could be of any use, Pop, 'twould be diff'runt. But, as et is, all Mary wants is to hev it sittin' around to kinder give a homey air. Ef it ain't home enough to hev plenty victuals an' wood, I want to know."

It was a habit of Bill Brown's to sit talking to his dog in such a manner for hours. Mary's tongue bothered him so that he seldom held out at length against her. But when alone with Pop he would air his thoughts without worry.

"You see, Pop," he went on, "you an' I hev a mission in life. It's my business to make money, an' it's your business to watch it. It's Mary's business to keep the place up tidy an' cook the victuals. We've all got somethin' to do. But when thet perret comes, what's *it* going to do?"

Although Bill Brown racked his brains for a solution to the puzzling question, he could not devise any way in which the great green bird could be made to earn its living.

Finally an idea came to him. He might use the bird to pester Mary. That would be a solution. If he could teach the bird a few annoying tricks his wife might repent of her bargain, and get rid of the pet.

Then Mary came home triumphant, with the big green bird in a wicker cage under her arm. Bill Brown looked up, but did not speak.

The cage was hung in a sunny window, and Mary busied herself getting some seeds for her pet.

"What did them seeds cost ye?" asked Bill abruptly.

"It ain't none of your business. I bought them with my own money."

"Your own money!" sneered the husband. "Jest as though you hed any."

"Well, I guess, William, thet I'm entitled to what I make off that settin' Mrs. Evans gave me an' I hed hatched out. Them pullets is mine, an' ef I choose to take one to town an' sell it I don't see as it's losin' 'eny money for you."

"They et my corn," grumbled Bill Brown.

A week passed.

Bill learned that the bird had been named Betty. Each time he came in from work he had a slighting remark to make about Betty. Once he threw a boot at her when she cackled at him as he entered, in the senseless way that parrots have of amusing themselves.

Mary said not a word. She only busied herself in repairing the cage and talking to the bird. But the next time Bill entered the door Betty cried:

"Hallo! Hallo! *Stingy! Stingy!*"

The blood mounted to Bill Brown's face. With difficulty he restrained himself from jumping at the bird and wringing its neck.

He caught a sly twinkle in his wife's eye. It was her work, or else the parrot had heard her speak of him as stingy. He was. He knew it. That was why the name hurt.

"A powerful smart parret you got, Mary," he sneered, controlling himself.

"Yes, he's a great reader of character, the man what sold him to me said," the wife answered glibly.

"Well, he won't hev any readin' to do as far as you're concerned," snapped the farmer.

"*William!*" cried the irate housewife.

"*William! William!*" screamed the parrot, and then, in an undertone it warbled: "Stingy, stingy, stingy!"

Bill Brown choked down a mountain of anger. Twice he approached the bird, as though he would pull it from the cage and wring its neck, but both times the intervention of Mary saved her pet.

Then Bill decided to carry out his own plan for revenge. If the bird could call him names, it could just as well abuse his wife.

"Will you go to town for me this afternoon, Mary?" asked Bill.

"What for?"

"I need some bone for th' chickens."

A quick fear sprang into Mary's eyes.

"No!" she cried. "I won't leave you with Betty. You'll kill her."

"No, I won't," protested Bill.

"Promise?"

"Yes."

"All right. Then I'll go," his wife replied.

When Bill Brown was alone with the bird a smile came into the hard lines around his mouth. Now he had his chance to get even with Mary.

"You're a fool! Get out of here! You're a fool! Get out!" he began repeating to the parrot.

The bird cocked its head to one side and listened. Then it primed its voice with a few gurgling chuckles and cried:

"You're a fool! You're a fool!"

"Get out! Get out of here!" urged Bill, delighted with his success.

Betty repeated the words successfully, and the farmer rubbed his hands with glee. He would have a nice surprise with which to greet Mary on her return.

Having assured himself that Betty was letter-perfect in her lesson, Bill went out to finish up his work on the farm. When he was through it had grown later than he thought, and he hurried home to give Betty a final coaching before the arrival of his wife.

He opened the door and passed into the kitchen.

"Get out! Get out of here! You're a fool!" screamed Betty, as he entered.

Bill smiled. The bird had remembered his lesson all right. Then he happened to look toward a corner. There sat his wife, with a triumphant smile.

"See, Betty's grown to know you!" she cried.

Bill Brown took a step back. His lesson had become a boomerang. Now he was getting a dose of his own medicine.

His fist clenched with anger. This would be the end. He would not have that shiftless, good-for-nothing parrot around any longer, making fun of him and eating up his money.

He approached the cage with one long stride. But Mary intervened, and, for the sake of present peace, Bill deferred the execution of the deed, but vowed that he would kill the bird at the first opportunity.

The Brown family went to bed early that night in silence. Bill was sullen, and his wife was gloating over the triumph her parrot had scored. There was never much harmony in the little household, but to-night there was none.

Bill could not sleep for anger. The very fact that his wife dozed off with little concern bothered him. Everything made him mad. He must find some way out of this foolish business, and at once, if he cared for his future peace of mind.

For the space of two hours Bill lay awake, cursing everybody and everything, but more particularly Betty, the parrot.

Suddenly an inspiration came to him. He would slip out of bed, sneak downstairs to the kitchen and kill the bird, then he would let Pop in, and fix the cage so that his wife would think in the morning that the dog had jumped up and dragged Betty to her death.

It was a brilliant idea. He chuckled at his own cuteness. It would save much talk if he shifted the blame. Pop was useful; he might as well use him in this way, too.

With a slow, sliding motion he slipped toward the edge of the bed. Mary was breathing heavily; everything was safe. Bill was somewhat of a coward. He felt guilty, and he felt afraid. His nerves were all on edge.

What if the bird should scream and awaken his wife, and she should come down and find him in the very act of killing her pet? Well, he would take the chance.

Finally he reached the floor and glided on toward the hall. There he stopped

still. He had heard a noise down-stairs. In his nervous state it had scared him. Then he braced himself, with the assurance that it was only Pop prowling about, and started on again.

He reached the kitchen-door, and was about to open it when he heard another noise that chilled him. He felt that somebody was in the house.

Being a coward, Bill made a hasty retreat for the bedroom, putting his faith in Mary's courage.

But as he started up the steps he stopped still, his heart in his mouth, and cold sweat bursting out all over him.

"Get out! Get out of here!" cried a loud voice, in a compelling tone.

He heard a scramble in the kitchen. Then the sound of breaking glass. Another voice broke on his now astonished ears.

"Run for it, Jack!" was the cry. "They'll pump us full of lead!"

"I'll make my getaway," was the answer.

And then another crash followed, and Farmer Brown realized vaguely that two men had flung themselves through his kitchen-window. His heart almost stopped beating.

Dimly he heard the cry again.

"Get out! You're a fool! Get out of here! You're a fool."

Then he realized. It was Betty's voice.

"What ef I'd gone into that kitchen with them thieves there?" he gasped to himself. "They'd hev killed me sure as fate."

Taking the steps four at a leap he reached the landing above. There his wife appeared in her night-dress, with wide, startled eyes.

"Come on! Come on, Mary!" he cried, getting behind her and pushing her forward. "I scared 'em out. I made 'em run. They was thieves."

A flickering smile passed over his wife's countenance, but she said nothing, as she led the way down the stairs.

A lamp was lighted, and Betty was found safe in her cage, pruning herself and calling aloud:

"Pretty Betty! Pretty Betty!" in a satisfied voice.

Bill Brown stepped to the broken window, through which the two thieves had crashed. He looked out. A black form lay beneath it.

"Look here, Mary!" he cried. "They've killed Pop."

Mary looked, and again she smiled, as she found that the dog, the watch-dog, lay below, and beside him a big chunk of meat, that she realized must have been poisoned.

"Pop was certainly a good watch-dog," she sneered.

"Yes," Bill Brown began slowly; "but they got the best of him. Poisoned meat, I guess."

"That's what it was," his wife told him. "An' probably ef you'd fed him oftener he wouldn't hev took meat from strangers."

"Well, I thought he was useful, but I guess he weren't much account after all," ruminated Bill Brown.

Then he stepped back and inspected the window through which the burglars had made their getaway.

"Dog-darn it," he cried, "why couldn't they have gone through the door? It'll cost me two dollars to get that fixed."

"Stingy! Stingy! Hallo, stingy!" cried the bird.

Bill Brown looked up at Betty. There was more pain than anger in his eyes. His wife jumped in between him and the parrot, thinking that he would carry out his threat.

"Don't worry, Mary. I guess you ken hev Betty. She ain't no account. But she may prove useful to you some day."

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## FRIENDS.

And what can Time hurt me, I pray, with,
If he insures
Such friends to laugh regrets away with
As you—and yours?

*Herman Charles Merivale.*

# NOT THE RIGHT MAN.

By GEORGE M. A. CAIN.

**What happened to the girl who came East and found that she was not expected after all.**

THE girl from the Golden West—not the one in the play, but another one—reached the exit gateway at New York's Grand Central Station. She waited there a few minutes, fingering the bit of blue ribbon at her throat. But nobody came forward. No one seemed to be expecting her.

A puzzled expression deepened into a look of mild consternation. The consternation turned to determination.

"Something is wrong," she said to herself. "Mama said he would surely be here—a stout, short man, with a homely face, blue eyes, dark hair. I'm sure none of these men are my cousin. Well, I can telephone."

A moment later she was looking for W's in the telephone-book.

"Gracious, what a lot of Wrights there are in the world!" she exclaimed. "I'll do better looking for the hotel. Let's see—oh, yes, it's the Sequanic! Se—ah, here it is—123,456 Harlem!"

It was about thirty seconds after that, or thirty minutes—it all depends on whether you or some one else is telephoning how long it takes to get the party—that Mr. Robert Wright, successful magazine artist, and twenty-five-year-old bachelor, heard the jingle of the telephone-bell in his studio in the Sequanic apartment-house.

"Hang it!" he growled. "I'm going to have the thing put out. Every time I get nicely down at something that requires real attention that beastly bell has to startle me out of my wits.

"Hallo!" he shouted crossly. Then, hearing the feminine voice at the other end of the wire, he asked more gently: "Who is this, please? Yes, this is Mr. Wright. Who did you say?

"Oh, yes, my Cousin Elizabeth, from Los Angeles. Yes, yes."

To himself he thought: "Now, who in the dickens is my Cousin Elizabeth, from Los Angeles?"

Aloud he uttered: "No, I didn't receive your mother's letter nor telegram, but that makes no difference. Just tell me what I can do, and I'll be only too glad."

As he listened the disgust came back into his face.

"Thunder!" he grunted under his breath. "Just as soon as a man makes enough of a noise to be heard of a mile or two from home he finds he has a thousand relatives who want to keep him from ever doing anything more in his life."

But what he spoke into the telephone was this: "I'm awfully sorry the letter didn't get here. I'll be only too happy to have the privilege of meeting you and taking you to the steamer. You say it sails at two? Well, it's twenty minutes past ten. We'll have time to get nicely acquainted yet. Just tell me how you're dressed, so that I can find you. I'll be down inside of half an hour.

"Yes—brown suit, hat to match, blue ribbon at your throat—all right. I'll be sure not to miss the blue ribbon."

As he slipped out of his smoking-jacket into a coat and under a hat he mournfully waved farewell to his easel. "Good-by, work," he sighed, "for another day. Let's see. What was it that gipsy woman told me at Coney last week? A dark girl—to meet her very soon, and in an extraordinary manner. Who can tell? Seems to me father did say something about some second or third cousins out West. But who wants a girl whose mother would impose on her relatives like this?"

Arrived at the station, he searched among the throng for a dark girl, with a brown suit and a blue throat ribbon.

Twice his attention was attracted by

the striking beauty of a certain blonde, who seemed to be waiting for somebody. The third time he passed her he noticed that she wore a brown suit and hat, and had a blue ribbon about her neck.

"What a goose I am," he muttered to himself. "It was the fortune-teller who said a dark girl, not my Cousin Elizabeth."

With his hat in his hand he approached the pretty blonde.

"Pardon me, but is this Miss Wright?"

The girl started.

"Why—why, yes. Are you Mr. Wright?"

She had barely avoided a gasp of surprise.

"Why," she thought, "he isn't short nor fat—he's almost tall. And he's anything but homely. Why, I'd like to know what mama would call handsome?"

"I'm awfully sorry I wasn't here to meet you," he apologized. "I can't understand why the telegram and letter failed to reach me. It's a shame. I—I should like to have more time with you."

The girl was already blushing a little from confusion and surprise at the unexpected good looks of her relative. She blushed more deeply with pleasure at the manner in which he delivered himself of the compliment.

She managed, however, to say: "I'm afraid I'll be taking too much of your time from business as it is."

"Oh, my business can wait, I guess. I had nothing of a rush order on hand. Now, let's see. How shall we do this? Let me have your baggage-checks, and I'll get a taxicab to take us to the steamer and see that everything is all right there. Then we'll have time to drive back to a hotel for luncheon. That will give you a little glimpse of New York. Or, would you rather do something else?"

"Oh, I should love to do that. I haven't seen much of New York since the time you showed it to me before."

There was a glance of mischief in the violet eyes.

The idea that he could ever have seen this glorious creature before and forgotten the fact forced the query from his lips: "Why, when was that?" Then he tried to think how he could apologize for not remembering. The girl saved him.

"I should have thought the spanking you got would have impressed it on your memory. It did on mine; and you were ten—I was only five."

"Oh!" and he breathed more easily again. "I got so many spankings, and did so many things to deserve them, that I shed the impressions easily. I'll go for the cab, and attend to the trunks."

"But, tell me about the time I showed you the town," he began as soon as they were comfortably seated in the open taxy. "I don't seem to remember anything about it."

He had been cudgeling his brain for some inkling of a visit from Western relatives in his childhood.

"Why, don't you know? We got away from our nurses and were lost for a whole afternoon. You got the blame for it, and the spanking. I really think I led you into it."

"Are you sure you haven't got me mixed with some other cousin?"

He knew that his father's candy store had never flourished enough to provide a nurse in the days of his childhood.

"Oh, it was you. It is hard to believe it, though. You don't look a bit as I expected you to. You were an awfully homely boy."

"Well, I hope I've changed for the better."

"Now, don't try to make people say nice things to you. But, you know, I think mama still sees you as you looked then. She told me you were short and stout, and she made me think you were worse looking than you really are."

"Impossible!" he gasped. "But I don't seem to remember your—"

He stopped. It would not be quite nice to say he didn't remember when he had seen her mother.

"My what?" she cut in.

"Your—your face as a child. I should think you must have had, even then, a face that—that one might remember."

"Oh, now you're trying to heap coals of fire on my head for my refusal to say something nice. But your admission of forgetfulness spoils it. They say I really *was* pretty as a child."

"That's why I can't understand my forgetting. Now, I never could forget again."

"Oh, *please,* Cousin James. That's just the kind of thing all the men begin with a girl. I think I've heard it all before a thousand times. And I've only been out a year."

The man started at the "James." His middle name was James, but no one had ever called him by it. He had, of late years, even discarded the initial. Robert James Wright had always seemed awkward to him.

But girls were funny. Probably she had some whimsical preference for James. At any rate, it was nice to have her call him by any old Christian name.

"Confound the other thousand!" he said aloud. "I don't know as I blame them much, though."

"This is the pier, isn't it? If you don't promise to talk real sensibly, I'm going to go aboard the boat and stay there."

"Oh, I'd promise anything to keep you —on shore till you have to leave. A stateroom is an awful place when the boat is standing still, you know."

"Just saved yourself," she laughed, as he took her ticket and began to assist in the assortment of trunks for the hold and cabin respectively.

He glanced at his watch as they again took their seats in the taxicab.

"Twenty minutes past twelve. Pshaw! We won't have time to do more than go straight to the hotel for luncheon and back. I wanted to take you up Fifth Avenue a little way. Hotel Sequanic." He gave the order to the driver. "And we'll have to hurry at that."

"Oh!" exclaimed the girl. "Now I shall see your wonderful grill-room. You know, all we could get out of father and mother when they got back last summer was talk about that dining-room in your hotel."

"But, really—"

He stopped. He did not wish to make any blunder. He had entertained a number of relatives last summer. He might possibly have had an uncle and aunt from California, though he could not recall anything of the sort. Of one thing he was sure—he had never taken any of them to the Hotel Sequanic. Never in his life had he been willing to pay the price of a meal there.

This girl—well, she was worth spreading one's self a bit for. But—*was* he her cousin? Had he any business taking her about?

Well, he certainly hoped he had. And, if he hadn't, what good could come of telling her so? It would only put her in an embarrassing position, and spoil a very pleasant hour for himself.

The girl was looking at him, waiting for the end of his sentence.

"Really," he repeated vaguely, "you know, there are other finer sights in New York than the Sequanic dining-room."

"But it *is* very fine, isn't it?"

"Oh, I suppose so."

The truth would have been that he knew nothing about it, save the common report of the artistic luxuriousness of the place.

"And I can't help wishing I had mama along so that I could see your rooms. You know, our house in Los Angeles is awfully old-fashioned. They say these modern New York hotels have wonderful contrivances for comfort. Mama said she would almost rather live in your suite than in Los Angeles."

"Good Lord!" thought the artist, "something *is* wrong. She has me mixed up somehow. My rooms in the Sequanic apartment-house are very good, but they are nothing wonderful. They could hardly start *her* parents into ecstasies. And—my dining-room! But what can I do about it?"

He sighed with the weight of the insoluble problem. Realizing that he must say something safe, he added to the sigh: "The finest rooms in a hotel are a long way from being a home."

Now, when a young man has already paid some rather fulsome compliments to a pretty girl, and then sighs and talks about the happiness of home, it is—well, it might be taken as significant.

"Oh, dear," the girl exclaimed, "how you must have changed in a year! Mama said you were the most utterly settled bachelor she ever saw. I suppose you've seen somebody that's unsettled you since."

"I have," he blurted out.

He accompanied the two words with a glance that was far more eloquent

than speech. She turned crimson, then changed the subject.

"Is this where they're digging that wonderful tunnel under the two rivers?"

"Yes." He spoke with a jerk.

For the moment he felt angry at her shifting the topic. Then he got control of himself by thinking of what a cad he was—taking around a girl who had surely made some mistake in sending for him. Perhaps his action in doing that was excusable. There could be no excuse for talking sentiment on the strength of such an acquaintance.

"It is about the greatest engineering feat ever accomplished," he said in reply to her remark about the tunnel.

"It's an awful looking hole, but I suppose it is nothing to some of your mines."

So, he was supposed to be interested in mines! Who the dickens did she take him for anyhow? But he had gone too far to retreat.

"Of course," he said, "a mine is a worse looking place than that. If we could see the part under the river, though, I think that would beat a mine."

"I don't suppose you ever go into your mines, do you? Just send some engineer down the shaft for you."

"No, I never go into a mine," he assented vigorously, lest she should ask some questions about the interior of the dismal places. "You can get more out of a mine if you stay out yourself."

"By the way, Cousin James," she began, with an attempt at the greatest nonchalance, "I wanted to ask you to do a great favor for me."

"Delighted to get the chance."

"Wait till I tell you what it is. I'm not so sure you'll be delighted. Mama said you'd never do it. But I want you to so much."

"Make up your mind that you are right, and your mother wrong this time, if the thing is at all possible."

"Well, you see, I have twenty thousand dollars that papa gave me for a birthday present. He said he wanted to see what I could do with it all by myself. Now, of course, I could not do anything at all by myself."

"Yes?"

"But I want to make a showing with that twenty thousand."

"Ye-es?"

"And your mining operations have been so—"

"So what?"

"So successful in every case. Everybody says it is wonderful."

"Um-m-ph?"

"And I wanted to know if you couldn't tuck my little present into a corner of something you were doing—something that you know is going to turn out real big?"

The magazine illustrator pursed his lips and whistled. The situation was growing slightly embarrassing.

Money was a commodity of which he could usually avail himself. But twenty thousand dollars to invest in mining stock for a pretty girl he had never seen before. That was a different proposition.

He thought of the five hundred he had once buried in a supposititious gold mine. No, there was no way of looking at the matter that would make it possible. He must refuse. And after the way she had asked.

"Now, my dear little—cousin," he began. "Of course, of course, I would be more than glad to do anything I could. But—but—"

"But you are not willing to do the thing I ask?" Her face flushed with anger, that might have been partly due to her disappointment at failing to accomplish anything she undertook with a man.

"I have not refused," he hastened to assert. "I only wished to tell you a few things before I took the responsibility of carrying out your request."

"Well?" There was a little modification of her anger.

"I want you to know that all mining ventures are the most awful risks. I don't profess really to know anything about them at all."

"Now, Cousin James, please don't give me a lecture on the vanity of speculation. Are you, or are you not, willing to do me this favor?"

"This is the Hotel Sequanic. We'll talk it over inside," and he drew a sigh of relief even for the shortest respite.

They followed a liveried flunky through the marble entry, with its sumptuous bas-reliefs. A truly magnificent

head-waiter towed them to a quiet corner of the, as yet, deserted grill-room. Another waiter sprang forward to help them to their seats. A third stood at attention with a slip of paper and pencil for the order.

After the matter of what they were to eat had been settled, they sat in silence for a few moments. He looked across the cut-glass pieces at her downcast eyes, and saw that she was waiting for him to say more relating to her request about the mining stocks. He hesitated to plunge into that unpleasant subject again, and looked at her once more.

Heavens, but she was beautiful! He wished he could paint her picture. No, he would be jealous of anybody that ever looked at it. He was jealous now of the hundreds of others who would see her this summer, who would talk with her, say silly things about her face—while he would be rubbed out of her memory as a strange man who had taken unwarranted liberties.

And some one of those other men would make love to her successfully, and marry her.

And he would go back to his studio and try to content himself with the comparative blank of the rest of the world. He would paint and draw pictures of things and of women who might have been taken for beautiful by any one who had not seen *her*.

Two hours ago she had come into his life. In another hour she would pass out of it.

"Lord!" he groaned aloud.

No; he could have it so. He would see her again. He would go to Europe, too. He would write a nice little letter when she had got far enough away to be no longer embarrassed, and explain how he had supposed she had been some relative.

He would remind her that she had really called him up by telephone. And then—he would beg to see her, not as her Cousin James, but as Robert Wright, humble artist, but, at least, half-way decent sort of fellow.

"Are you going to spend the entire summer in England?" he ventured to inquire.

"Not all of it," came back in a frosty tone that reminded him the twenty-thousand-dollar affair was not yet settled.

"I am not sure but I shall be able to get across myself before the end of summer," he went on, ignoring the chill wave. "I would count myself lucky if our paths chanced to cross."

There was just the slightest toss of the pretty head. It would not have been perceptible save for the tremor in the bewitching little curl that hung over one of her big blue eyes. Then suddenly her manner changed.

"And you'll bring me a whole lot of—dividends, you call them, don't you—from my twenty thousand?"

He sighed hopelessly. Would she never forget those beastly ducats?

"And suppose I should come and tell you that they had all been swallowed up in some mistake?" he ventured, regarding this response as an inspiration.

He changed his mind, and looked upon it as a blunder. She fairly bristled.

"And do you imagine that I have not sufficient sporting blood to stand a loss if it happens? Do you think I'd try to hold you responsible for it?"

And then he had a real inspiration.

"My dear Cousin Elizabeth, let me tell you. There are certain reasons why I cannot possibly take your money at this time. There are other reasons why I cannot tell you the first reasons—not just now. All that is pretty vague, isn't it? But, if you will be patient enough to wait till you get to the other side, I will have a letter there that will explain all about it. And if you then wish me to invest the money, send it on. Now, is that satisfactory?"

He accompanied his question with a smile that drove the last cloud from her face.

"Well, I wanted to telegraph to mama to send on the check immediately. But, I suppose, I'll have to wait."

"I'm sorry to disappoint you even that much, but you'll understand when you get my letter."

"This isn't just a promise to get me out of the way, is it?" she inquired distrustfully.

"It is my word of honor," he asseverated.

And then she told him all the places she intended to visit. She gave him the

names of the hotels at which she planned to stop. From all of these he chose the Hôtel de France, in Sorrento.

"Of all the places in the world that comes being a proper setting for your—"

He paused, and they both looked up at the loud-voiced individual who was in the act of seating himself at an adjoining table.

He was a man hardly older than the artist. But his stout figure and unusually ill-formed features made him appear older. Instinct, at first, then recollection, gave the artist a feeling that this individual was going to make things uncomfortable. He glanced at the girl, and saw a look of surprise cross her features. That helped him to recollect some more. Yes, he understood it all now, all but the telephone-call.

He recognized this short, stout, unpleasant-looking young millionaire. He had been one of the artists who had cartooned that same fat face when its owner's daring speculations in mining stock had succeeded so marvelously as to turn his head with the idea that he was a Napoleon of finance, thus earning the nickname "The Spoiled Kid of Wall Street."

And the present escort of Miss Elizabeth Wright knew that the "Spoiled Kid's" real name was James L. Wright.

As all these things took form in his memory, Robert Wright darted a second uneasy glance at the girl. Then he breathed slowly two or three times to get his heart back to normal action.

The girl had ceased to look at the newcomer, and was giving her undivided attention to the oysters which had just been set before her.

The other Wright, having finished his order, began leisurely tearing open one of three yellow envelopes before him. Then both the girl and her companion were startled a second time by his voice:

"The devil! François, come here. Where's that messenger-boy? Call him back. This is an outrage—an *outrage*, I say. Here's a telegram from an aunt of mine in Los Angeles, saying my cousin is coming on the ten o'clock train to the Grand Central Station, asking me to meet the girl there. And this is the time I get it. Get that messenger-boy, will you? Don't stand there looking at me like a fool. And tell them to get my machine here on the instant. And hurry up that luncheon. Move, will you? I've got to see what I can do about this."

He made no immediate move himself. It was evident that he did not intend to seek his lonely cousin on an empty stomach.

But the girl moved. With a glance at her erstwhile companion that would have turned a ghost into solid stone, she arose and turned to her irate cousin.

"Here I am, Cousin James," she said in a voice that trembled with the shock of the discovery of her mistake.

She looked at Robert Wright as though she half feared he were about to follow. He had, indeed, arisen, but he sat down again limply.

The youthful millionaire came to his feet and greeted her effusively. Her manner led him to ask immediately: "And who is this gentleman?"

The question was put in a tone that betrayed a desire to thrash the interloper, whoever he might be.

"I—I don't know," the girl stammered.

Her cousin looked from her face to that of the artist, then back again. His face grew crimson.

"He — he answered the telephone when I called for you," she went on; "and he came to the station, and he took me in a motor-cab to the steamer, and he called me 'Cousin Elizabeth,' and he brought me here to luncheon; and—oh, it's awful!"

She sank weakly into one of the leather chairs.

"The rascal—the contemptible scoundrel! What do you mean, sir, by taking advantage of a helpless young lady? I'll have you arrested. I'll thrash you myself. Come here, you cur, and let me—and—and explain, if you can, this confounded impertinence."

The sudden anticlimax in the series of threats may have been due to the fact that Robert Wright, flaming with wrath, had arisen to his full height and advanced a couple of steps in obedience to the other Wright's demand.

"My name is Robert James Wright." The artist's voice was vibrant with rage. "I received this young lady's telephone-call in my own apartment."

"The deuce you did What's your telephone number, if you have any?"

"123,456 Harlem," snapped the artist.

"Why," exclaimed the girl, "that *is* the number I called. But it said 'the Sequanic.'"

"The Sequanic Apartments, not the Hotel Sequanic," said Robert Wright, more gently, as he addressed the girl.

"Humph!" growled the young millionaire. "These cheap apartments ought not to be allowed to take the names of good hotels. But why, sir, did you not inform the young lady that she had made a mistake? Why didn't you do that? If you were a gentleman, why—"

"If you will be sufficiently a gentleman to listen to the rest of my explanation, perhaps you'll understand why. I have a good many relatives on the Pacific coast whom I know no better than your cousin seems to have known you. I supposed that Miss Wright was one of them."

"And it's taken you two hours of chasing her about in motor-cabs to see your mistake?" interrupted the plump mining king.

"No, it hasn't," Robert Wright reluctantly admitted. "I saw it inside the first hour. I did not explain to Miss Wright because I thought it would put her in a very embarrassing position, and —because—"

"Because you hoped you could get some money out of her," again interrupted the successful manipulator of mining stock.

"He hoped nothing of the kind," the girl burst forth indignantly at her cousin's unreasonableness. "I tried my very best to force twenty thousand dollars upon him to invest for me, thinking he was yourself, of course. And he refused, although I made it as hard for him to do so as I could."

She looked triumphantly at her cousin. Then she looked at her late escort, and there was a gracious smile on her face. In the momentary silence, while the two men tried to overcome their mutual wrath, she glanced at the tiny watch on the front of her coat.

"It is time for me to be going if I'm ever to catch that steamer."

She smiled on both the young men in a manner to assist them in forgetting that they had ever been angry at anything. "And I should be very happy to have you both accompany me to the pier."

"You won't have to write that letter of explanation now," she gaily reminded the artist as the "all-ashore" bell sounded. "But I hope you're not going to give up seeing Sorrento this summer."

"I certainly have not given it up," he joyously assured her, as their hands met in a parting clasp.

"'Meet her very soon in an extraordinary manner,' that fortune-teller said," he told himself as he sat down once more before his easel. "But it was to be a dark girl, and Miss Elizabeth Wright is a superb blonde. Oh, well, the old gipsy was doing about as well as one could expect of a black-art lady."

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# WHAT HE SAW AT MIDNIGHT.

By RADNOR M. COOTE.

The temptation of a man who looked at what he had no business to see.

LOCKED! Doane turned from the massive oak door with an irritated exclamation and groped his way along the wall to the main entrance to the room. Here the handles turned easily enough, but no answering movement followed his pressure against them.

Somewhat dismayed, he lighted a match, sought the electric switch, and by a touch flooded the place with the soft glow of the incandescents. The sight of two untried doors added to his cheerfulness; but their determined unresponsiveness to his immediate attempt to open them marked the climax of his growing alarm.

Two o'clock in the morning, imprisoned in the court-room of the country's most beautiful hall of justice! The situation was far from serious, but Doane could imagine more pleasant ways of passing the night than his prospective six hours of fitful slumber on the leather upholstered chairs. Lighted from a dome, there were no windows from which he could call to the street for help.

Doane now entered the raised enclosure where daily sat the five grave judges. A beautifully carved door directly behind the seat of the presiding justice opened at his touch, and a long dark passage stretched before him.

It took Doane but a moment to try the first two doors that the light from a carefully conserved match disclosed. The result in each case was the same—security. But the third and last entrance to the passage opened to him, and he eagerly began the ascent of the narrow flight of stairs leading upward from it.

But two matches remained in his box, and it was in darkness that he reached the floor above, passed through two doors, down a long hall, and felt that he had reached the end of his journey in a small room. The light of another match, and of a letter taken from his pocket to serve as a torch, proved that his surmise was correct, and also disclosed the fact that no door opened into the room other than that by which he had entered. And the window in it opened only on an inner court of the building.

Determined to retrace his steps and carefully examine the walls of the two passageways through which he had come, Doane rolled another letter into a taper and lighted it with his remaining match.

As he was about to pass out, the light from the blazing paper in his hand fell upon a legal document lying on a near-by desk, and from its white page there stood out a name which made him forget completely his present situation.

Not aware of the wrong he was doing, he read by the failing light of his torch these words:

> The Excelsior Consolidated Company has disregarded the law, become liable for the penalties it prescribes for such infractions, and though it may mean total ruin for the company, this court should see to it that these penalties are paid. The judgment should be reversed and a new trial ordered.

The paper burned unnoticed to Doane's fingers, and he stood motionless in the darkness.

"Total ruin for the company—"

There came to him the remembrance of the trusting, confident eyes of Grace Garden, as, a year before, he had placed in her hands the shares of stock in the Excelsior Company, which represented her entire share of her father's estate. Young and inexperienced in the ways of the financial world had he been; but when she had come to his little Wall Street office and asked his advice as to the investment of her small fortune, there had been but one possibility in his mind—the old, conservative, safe Excelsior Company.

The income it had paid her had justified his judgment; and when lately, a strenuous official of the government had sought to compel the company to pay a tremendous sum as accumulated penalties for failure to comply with the law, all the world seemed to treat it as a joke.

But here, in the darkness of the court-house's little room, lay a paper, stating, in the judge's unyielding terms, that the company had broken the law and must suffer. That it meant ruin, Doane knew, for even the organization's rich treasury would not be able to meet the demands which this document imposed.

There was but one course to pursue. He knew that no intimation of this decision had yet reached the public, and the supposed impossibility of such a determination's being reached had left the market value of the stock unimpaired by the lawsuit. He knew also that some early attendant of the court-house would end his imprisonment; and that, after a conference with Grace, he could sell the stock before the decision so adverse to the company could affect its price.

In the blackness of the solemn building Doane groped his way back to the brilliantly lighted court-room, and found a comfortable place in which to await his liberation.

Suddenly, born of his forced contemplation of the fine, grave faces of the

pictured judges on the walls about him came the thought:

"Can I make this use of the knowledge I have obtained by chance?"

The circumstances leading up to his present situation passed rapidly through his mind.

George Summers and he had attended a dance together the evening before, and, passing the court-house on their way home, the former had mentioned his desire to show Doane the beauties of the place where his daily labor lay. The deathless mystery of the apartments had enveloped Doane, as George turned his key in the lock, swung open the door, and disclosed the majestic room where he now was.

The first sight of its decorations had so impressed the young man that he had begged his companion to leave him to a further contemplation of their perfections. George, very sleepy himself, had laughingly acquiesced and departed, forgetting, in his amusement at his friend's enthusiasm, the spring lock of the door, and the fact that Doane had no key. An hour of appreciative enjoyment for the young stock-broker had followed—with the resulting complications.

And now! The dawn was melting through the huge dome above him; George's parting injunction, half smiling, half serious—"Remember I am doing very wrong to leave you here alone, and any secrets you learn from your lonely study of the frescoes are sacred," was ringing in his ears; serious, upright faces of the dead were gazing down at him, and—then he slept.

Early Doane was awakened by a surprised janitor. A hurried, apparently satisfactory explanation followed, and he was free to enjoy his breakfast at a neighboring restaurant.

Not heeding the unconventional hour, still in the evening-dress of the night before, Doane presented himself at Grace Garden's home and asked for an immediate interview with her. His impatience could scarcely brook the slight delay which followed the request, unusual at such an hour; but impatience was nothing to his consternation at being informed that Miss Garden was out of town for a week.

A glance at the clock standing in the large hall told him that he could reach the suburb where she was visiting in ample time to see her and ascertain her view of his decision before it would be necessary to take further steps.

Buttoning his coat firmly about him, as much to conceal his attire as to protect his body from the increasing April wind, Doane hurried to the station, rushed through the gate, heedless of the guard, and swung on to a train for Greenport as it was already moving out of the station.

He had arranged in his own mind the most concise terms in which to present the situation to the girl, and was sitting, watch in hand, when the welcome cry, "Gre'pot!" brought an end to his meditations.

The wind had continued to blow, and now there came with it sheets of drenching rain, as Doane faced its blast and followed directions for reaching the house where Miss Garden was visiting.

A bedraggled, mud-spattered object he was, as a comfortably dry maid superciliously informed him that Miss Garden was not in, that she and her friend had spent the night with the latter's aunt, who lived some three miles distant, and probably would not return until afternoon.

No, the aunt had no telephone, and Miss Garden and her companion had taken the horse; but the young man might have an umbrella, if he really was a friend of Miss Garden and desired to walk the distance.

It was only nine o'clock, and the three miles could be covered in spite of the elements in less than three-quarters of an hour. With the ironical remark, "I do not care for the umbrella, thank you," Doane faced the wind, absorbed more of the rain, and started up the road. The journey seemed unending to the determined young man; but at last he stood, mud from his ruined hat to his low patent-leathers, on the steps of what was unquestionably the aunt's home.

Grace Garden herself came to the door.

"Frank!" was all she said, but the wonder on her face added untold questionings to the exclamation.

"Yes, Grace, I know I am an awful sight," replied Doane, "and I will tell

you all about it; but first I must have a talk with you. No, I will not come in and flood you out of the house; we will talk here, if you do not mind."

The girl returned in a moment with a heavy wrap about her shoulders, and they sought a sheltered corner of the broad veranda. The swirling rain beyond drove them very close together.

"Grace," began the young man, "I have been an idiot in my advice to you. I ought to have seen what might possibly come. You remember the time I suggested that you invest in the Excelsior Company?"

"And very good advice it was, Frank."

"Perhaps it was. But now the court is about to make a decision which will so deplete the treasury that, if it does not ruin the company, will drive the value of its stock so low that your entire income will be practically cut off."

The girl's face was a study.

"I do not know quite what I shall do, Frank. I have not been taught to earn my own living, and I am—alone."

It was difficult for him to continue.

"And now comes the hard part, Grace. The decision has not been given out yet, and you can sell your stock for more than you paid for it, if—"

"Oh, then it's all right, isn't it? You did frighten me so!"

"That is what I want to ask you, Grace. *Is* it all right? In every perplexity that I have had during the past year—every time I have doubted what was right and what wrong—I have come to you. And your decision has been final. And — it has always been the right one. I come to you now, when all you have in the world is at stake."

Very quietly he told her of the night's experience, and of the chance which had given him the important information.

"At first it seemed very simple," he concluded. "You must just sell the stock immediately. But when I sat there in the court-room, surrounded by the pictures of men whose lives had been devoted to studying the right as they saw it—in a room where every day sat five judges whom no personal gain could influence to a questionable decision—it did *not* seem right for me to use the information I had gained. Only your word that I am wrong will make me doubt."

She was silent a moment.

"Let me understand, Frank. Your friend has advance knowledge of this sort often in the course of his work?"

"Yes."

"Would it be right for him to use such knowledge for personal ends—to buy and sell stocks on the strength of it?"

"Certainly not, Grace."

"Would he leave any one but a friend —whom he trusted—there alone?"

"I think not."

"Friend—trust," said the girl simply. "There is but one answer, and—it is the one you have made."

"But, Grace, you do not realize how much it means to you."

"It means nothing compared to the knowledge that we — you and I — had done together—a dishonest thing."

There was another silence. The rain beat upon the roof. Perhaps the wind mocked the girl's words.

Finally she spoke again.

"I will go back to town with you, to be prepared to take advantage of any information which may come to us legitimately."

As they returned over the road to Miss Strange's, protected from the wind by the curtains of her graciously offered conveyance, the silence between them was broken only by the plash of the horse's hoofs in the mud.

The same evening Doane called at his friend's apartments. For the second time that day he detailed his adventure of the night before, leaving, however, for subsequent discussion his finding of the legal opinion.

George laughed heartily, blaming himself for the dénouement of an act on his part which, viewed in any light, had been wrong.

"By the way," he said, "they handed down the decision in the Excelsior Company case late to-day. I forgot to call you up, though you did want me to tell you as soon as I could."

"Well," commented Doane grimly, "I may as well tell you now. I read the written opinion at about three this morning by the light of a burning letter. It will put the company out of business, I suppose."

"Rather not," replied his friend. "The court held that no law had been violated, and the stock will probably go up five points in value to-morrow."

"What? Why, I remember the words of the opinion distinctly—'The Excelsior Consolidated Company has violated the law'—"

"Ignoramus," came from Summers, "don't you know that in our court five judges hear a case, then vote on it, and a decision of a majority settles it? In your inquisitive investigations last night, you probably saw Judge Stone's opinion, in which no one else agreed—all voted the other way. If you had looked at the top of the page, you would have seen 'Stone, J. Dissenting.'"

# THE MISSING MESSENGER.

By EDMUND E. FIELD.

**The far-reaching outcome of an impulsive act, and one which it would be hazardous to imitate.**

"TAKE up that grip, I want the seat!" George Turner spoke very decidedly as he stood beside the only vacant space in the car.

The occupant of the other half — a man of middle age—either disregarding or not hearing—paid no attention to the command, and continued reading. Beside him, on the seat, was a satchel.

"I say, take up that grip; I want that seat," ordered Turner for the second time, his voice pitched two tones higher.

Instantly heads were turned from the front and rear of the coach, to get a glimpse of the speaker and ascertain the cause of the angry tones.

The man in the seat continued to read his magazine, apparently unconscious of the fact that he was the center of observation.

"I guess he imagines it's his privilege to monopolize the whole seat," remarked the man just behind, "even if the car is crowded and people are standing."

The man in the seat opposite looked on and grinned.

"I'll show him whether he can or not," declared Turner. Then, addressing the man again, he added: "Say, if you don't take up that grip, I'll throw it out of the window."

The fellow now for the first time raised his eyes, glanced at Turner, and then turned again to the perusal of his magazine.

"What do you think of that for nerve?" remarked the man in the seat behind.

The fellow opposite continued to grin.

Turner by this time was in a frenzy of rage. Suddenly bending over, he picked up the grip and threw it out of the open window of the fast-moving train. Then he mopped the perspiration from his brow, settled himself in the coveted seat, and observed in an undertone:

"I'll show you, you selfish beast!"

Just then the conductor came hurrying into the car, having been informed that some one was creating a disturbance. He was followed by a man wearing a white vest, who glanced from side to side as he advanced, until he reached the seat where the conductor was inquiring from Turner the cause of the disturbance.

"Well, it's all over now," growled Turner. "If this man thinks he can plant his grip on a seat and force people to stand, he's got another think coming. I taught him a lesson he won't forget in a hurry."

The man opposite grinned again.

"Did you ask him to remove his grip?" inquired the conductor.

"Did I ask him?" grumbled Turner. "It looked as if he expected me to get down on my knees and beg him."

The man beside him, the cause of the commotion, looked up in blank amazement.

The man wearing the white vest now touched the conductor on the arm. "I left my grip on a seat, and now I can't find it," he said.

The man opposite, pointing to Turner

with the grin still on his face, and as if the whole thing was a good joke, now interposed with:

"That guy there threw it out of the window."

"What!" excitedly exclaimed the owner of the grip, making a rush for the door as if to jump from the speeding train.

Several of the passengers quickly blocked the doorway, and the car was at once in an uproar.

The conductor demanded of Turner by what right he threw other people's property away.

"Why, I thought it belonged to him," explained Turner, inclining his head toward the man in the seat beside him. "He never spoke a word when I asked him to take down the grip and let me sit down. He never even said whether the grip was or was not his. He simply sat there, ignoring me, just tantalizing me by his silence, so I finally became enraged."

"That doesn't excuse you in the least," the conductor informed him, taking from his pocket a book, in which to make note of the occurrence.

Then, turning to the man in the seat opposite, the conductor inquired:

"Were you a witness of this affair?"

"Sure," responded the grinning man. "I saw the whole thing. I was the first in the car. I saw that fellow come in with his grip and sit there. After the train started he got up and went into the smoker, leaving his bag on the seat where he placed it. At the first stop the old fellow got on and took the vacant seat beside the grip."

Before he could proceed further the conductor inquired: "Why didn't you speak when you saw the man asking to have the grip removed?"

"It was none of my funeral," he replied, the grin still on his face. "I wanted to see how it would turn out."

The conductor then turned to the man with the magazine and asked: "Why didn't you speak? Why didn't you tell this man that the grip was not your property?"

The man looked at the conductor with a puzzled expression and began to move his fingers.

"Why," exclaimed the conductor in astonishment, "the fellow is deaf and dumb!"

Turner mopped his brow and uttered an exclamation.

The owner of the grip, who had been in wildly excited talk with passengers in the rear of the car, now rushed up to the conductor, exclaiming: "Stop the train! I must get off! That grip contained valuable securities!

"You big stuff!" he yelled, and before any one could interfere, he sprang at Turner and dealt him several blows.

Then the train pulled into a station.

Excitement ran high. The conductor, with the assistance of several passengers, separated and held the two men. The police were promptly on hand and placed them both under arrest for disturbing the peace.

Tom Rogers, the owner of the grip, tried to explain and pleaded to be allowed to find the lost bag. The police absolutely refused to listen to any explanations. Turner protested and proclaimed to be the victim of an assault.

"You'll both have an opportunity to air yourselves and tell your troubles to the judge," was the only consolation they could get from the officers who had them in charge.

They were immediately arraigned before the justice in the thrifty town where they had been arrested. Both insisted upon explaining at the same time the cause of the trouble. The judge waved his hand for silence, and inquired if either had witnesses to corroborate and substantiate the truthfulness of their statements. He was informed that all who witnessed the occurrence, no doubt, were still on the train.

"Then I will remand you both until I hear from the railroad people," decided the judge, and ordered them locked up.

Rogers begged for long enough liberty that he might have a chance to recover his lost grip, which contained valuable securities. The judge was obdurate. "If you could deliberately abandon a grip containing valuable securities, as you admit, on a seat in a train for several hours," he said, "you can wait until to-morrow morning, when I hope to hear from the railroad people as to just what part of the disturbance you created."

No one took his claim seriously. That his grip had been thrown from the car-window had been established beyond a doubt; otherwise his story seemed ridiculous in the estimation of those who heard it.

The two men were arraigned the next morning, the judge having received the information he desired from the railroad people. He concluded that there was no law that could restrain a man from throwing a grip from a train window. Besides, no one on the train would give his name as a witness.

As for the charge of assault, the fellow appeared to be none the worse for it, so the judge lectured both prisoners and discharged them.

"That grip contained valuable securities, that's what Mr. Hawkins told me," Rogers muttered as he left the court-room and headed for the railroad track.

The few curious people that had been attracted to the court-house followed him. When he reached the road-bed he turned and walked in the direction of the city whence he came.

## II.

On the morning following the departure of Rogers, the firm of Hawkins & Co. waited very anxiously for a message from him.

His instructions were: "When you arrive at your destination and deliver the securities contained in the grip, which are all valuable, you will receive a certified check equal to the amount. When the deal is closed, wire us before you leave for home."

Ten—eleven—twelve o'clock, and not a word had been received from him. Mr. Hawkins, the president of the firm, became restless, consulting his watch at intervals as he paced the floor of his office and nervously remarked to one of his officers:

"I can't understand why that fellow has not wired us, as instructed."

One—two o'clock, and not a word received.

"Surely nothing could have happened to him!" anxiously exclaimed Mr. Hawkins. "To be on the safe side, I'll wire to ascertain if he has arrived."

Just before three o'clock he received the following reply:

> Have been anxiously and patiently awaiting the arrival of your messenger. Up to this time he has not arrived.

"What on earth does it mean?" Mr. Hawkins asked himself.

Rogers was regarded as a level-headed, evenly balanced, and thoughtful man. Could an accident have befallen him? "We must protect our interests, and I suggest that the police be notified to investigate," Mr. Hawkins said to his partner.

The suggestion was promptly acted upon, and the wires along the line flashed messages of inquiry. The police quickly learned that a man answering such description had created a disturbance on the railroad train with a passenger who, it was said, threw a grip out of the car-window.

The police offered the theory that the messenger and the other fellow were in a plot. The grip was disposed of in a manner prearranged, and at a place along the line where confederates waited for it. The fact that neither the messenger nor the other man could be traced strengthened that theory.

It soon became noised about that a messenger in the employ of Hawkins & Co. had disappeared with gilt-edged securities amounting to one hundred thousand dollars.

It was not a great amount where millions change hands daily; but a fortune, representing the reserve capital of an ordinary firm like Hawkins & Co.

A group of curb-brokers stood discussing the possible chances Rogers, the messenger, would take in trying to turn the bonds into money.

"Why, he'd get pinched the minute he offered them for sale; or, at least, when he tried to cash the check he received in payment for them," one of the wise ones remarked.

"You may be right, but I don't imagine for a second he went it blind," returned another. "He knew just where he was to deliver the goods."

"Yes, but consider the chances in a lawsuit the speculator who bought them would take," put in another.

"Chances—chances!" exclaimed Jack Dean, one of the oldest brokers on the curb, who had been quietly listening to

the opinion of the younger set. "Why, you dubs, isn't it chances every one of us takes? Do the other fellow before he has a chance to do you. My opinion is, whoever bought the bonds has money enough to buy all the law he wants to hold them."

Next day stocks began to tumble; the bottom seemed to drop out of everything. Among the first to go to the wall were Hawkins & Co.

"It's no use," said the head of the firm to his partner, despondently shaking his head. "We're cleaned up."

"If we had had those bonds, we could have saved ourselves," was the gloomy response.

"We wouldn't have had them if Rogers had succeeded in delivering them as instructed," meditatively responded Hawkins. "They would have been sold."

"True," responded the partner, "but we would have had the money in the safe."

Just then one of the clerks entered and announced:

"The Clinton Bank of Fox Center has gone up. I understand that it has been shaky for three days," he added.

Both partners sprang to their feet and gazed at each other for a minute in bewilderment.

"That is the bank whose check would have furnished the money you hoped to have in the safe," remarked Mr. Hawkins.

"Judging from the reported condition of the bank, it looked as if it could not have been cashed. In that event, we would be no better off than we are now. They would have had the bonds, and we the uncashed check on a defunct bank," the partner drearily replied.

"Well," observed Hawkins, "when the excitement subsides we'll look over the wreck and see just how we stand."

The authorities were not asleep in their efforts to try and locate Rogers. When they reached the town where both men had been under arrest, and learned that the justice had discharged the men, they criticized his action very severely.

"Just think," said one of the detectives; "he had them caged, then opened the door and let them fly away. Why, if that judge had had sense enough to hold those fellows for twenty-four hours longer, the whole thing would have been cleaned up by this time."

"What charge could he have held them on?" one of the townspeople wanted to know. "I think, with the evidence in hand, he used very good judgment."

"Judgment nothing!" responded the detective with an expression of disgust. "He could have held them as suspicious characters and taken his chances of something turning up. Those fellows bluffed him to a finish; they were on to their job, all right."

"The judge did his duty as the circumstances warranted—you go and do yours," curtly responded the native as he walked away.

The detectives were informed that when Rogers left the court-room he had proceeded to the railroad track and started to walk in the direction of the city from which he had come.

"I don't think he walked very far before he was well taken care of," the detective commented. "What became of the other fellow?"

No one seemed to be able to give any information concerning him.

"He seemed to disappear mysteriously," was the general response.

The detective nodded his head and took several successive puffs from his big black cigar. "I guess he joined the other fellow down the line," was his comment.

## III.

Rogers continued his walk along the railroad track, his thoughts concentrated on the one hope—the finding of the lost grip.

He walked for several hours in the scorching sun. He seemed dazed. So unconscious was he of the danger that beset him that he did not notice the approach of a fast-speeding train until the terrific shriek of the whistle, the hissing of steam, and the applying of the emergency-brakes aroused him. With a sudden start he jumped from the track and rolled down the embankment, barely escaping instant death. The train sped on.

When he recovered his senses, he scrambled up the embankment and sat on its edge. Tired, footsore, and discouraged, he did not notice the two tramps who came toward him until one spoke:

"Dat was a puddy close call youse had."

Rogers was too weary to reply; he hardly raised his head to see who it was that addressed him.

The two tramps held a consultation and glanced around in all directions. It was a wide and barren stretch of country just there. They ordered Rogers to give up his coat and vest; he was too done up to move. Seeing his weakened condition, one of the tramps quickly removed the articles, while the other took possession of the victim's trousers. They left behind the old clothes one of them had worn and made a quick getaway.

After he had gained sufficient strength he put on the clothes the tramp had discarded. Rogers looked a sight!

After walking for an hour he espied a farmhouse.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed, "I can now get assistance."

As he approached the gate and was about to enter, he heard a female voice scream:

"Don't you come in here, you dirty tramp!"

"But—" He was about to explain.

"But nothing. You don't butt in here, I tell you; go along, or I'll loosen the dog."

As she spoke, a deep, snarling growl could be plainly heard.

"Go away, I tell you, you dirty tramp!" the woman yelled, as she rattled a chain.

The increasing yelps of the dog persuaded Rogers to beat a retreat, and he returned to the railroad tracks.

He walked on for a time. The day was fast closing, and twilight had come as he neared a small town. He concluded to abandon the search for the lost grip, explain to some one in authority his predicament, and solicit assistance to go home.

While these thoughts were crowding through his brain, he slowly turned into Main Street, where he was suddenly stopped by the command: "Say, you, where do you think you are going?"

It was a burly fellow, with his pants tucked into his boots, who spoke.

"Why, I am going into town," replied Rogers.

"You think you are, you mean. Don't you know that tramps are not allowed in this burg?"

"I'm no tramp I'd have you understand," retorted the disguised Rogers.

"Well, I wouldn't take you to be a millionaire. Let me inform you that tramps are arrested and put to do road-work when they set foot in this town. I am constable, with full authority of the law to arrest you, so come on now, no fooling," and the burly fellow placed his hand on Rogers's shoulder. "Don't you try any monkey business with me."

"But let me explain, if you are an officer of the law," pleaded Rogers.

"That's what I said I am, and don't you try to bamboozle me with your talk, either. Now, come on."

Rogers contented himself with the thought: "I am to be brought before some one who has a grain of common sense—one who will listen to reason."

But, to his surprise, the constable led him direct to the lockup for the night.

"I insist upon seeing the justice."

"You certainly have more nerve than any tramp I ever saw or heard of. Do you suppose the judge will be disturbed from his supper jest to hear you shoot off your mouth? If you'd been a wise hobo, you'd a know'd this town and kept away. You must be a new one in these parts; you'll know better next time. Shut up!"

Slamming the door and turning the key, the burly constable walked out, feeling he had done a noble act.

Rogers was surprised and disgusted the next morning when he was ordered out to work on the road without even a chance to be heard.

His vigorous protest and unusual command of good language attracted the attention of the town lawyer, who listened to his story.

"If you will interest yourself," the distracted messenger begged him, "and forward a message to my employers, you will be fully compensated."

The attorney concluded that the man was either a rank fraud or a lunatic. However, it wouldn't take long to ascertain if he was telling the truth. Taking paper and pencil from his pocket, he bade Rogers to write out his message.

"You will be doing the greatest act of kindness one man can do another!" exclaimed Rogers. "I'll owe you a debt

of gratitude as long as I live," and quickly writing the message, he handed it to the attorney, to be forwarded.

The lawyer looked at the man, and then at the paper, which read:

I am locked up at Jewel. Come to my assistance immediately. ROGERS.

IV.

IMAGINE the consternation this message created when, in less than an hour, it was received at the office of Hawkins & Co. The head of the firm grasped the opportunity as a drowning man would grab at a straw.

"Maybe he can at last give us some information as to what became of the bonds!" he exclaimed. "I'll go at once."

Rogers patiently awaited the arrival of some one who could recognize him. The town clock struck one—two, yet no one appeared. He was beginning to doubt that the attorney had sent the message, when the door opened and he caught a glimpse of a familiar figure on the threshold.

He almost screamed out, "Mr. Hawkins! Mr. Hawkins!" and dropped on a bench, overcome.

Hawkins looked at his clerk in amazement. He could not seem to grasp the situation. The careworn and deep-furrowed face and the habiliments of a tramp bewildered him. When he recovered himself he inquired: "Rogers, Rogers, what does all this mean?"

It did not take the messenger long to give a full account of his experiences from the day he left the office with the grip containing the bonds up to the present moment. Mr. Hawkins listened attentively, his face changing expression from time to time as the other proceeded.

"Then you have no idea what became of the grip?" he inquired.

"No, not the faintest idea," responded Rogers mournfully.

Just then one of the men who stood in the group, and who had been attracted to the place out of sheer curiosity, nudged his companion and whispered in an undertone: "Cy, I wonder if that ere bag you picked up t'other day had anything to do with the one they're talking about?"

"I don't reckon it did," responded Cy.

The justice, who stood close by and overheard the conversation, quickly inquired:

"Cy, did you pick up a bag?"

Instantly all heads were turned in the direction of the speaker.

"Why, yes, judge. You see, last Monday, when I was a coming home in my farm-wagon and drivin' along the turnpike that crosses the railroad a mile west of the town, I pulled up quickly to let the express-train go by. She was a flying, too. When I drove across the track my left-side horse kicked something. I looked and saw a bag lying in the road. I picked it up, thinkin' some of the neighbors dropped it off a wagon."

"Who did you give it to?" questioned the justice.

"Why, I didn't give it to anybody. I jest took it hum, waiting for some one to ask for it," answered Cy.

"Well, did any one claim it?"

"Not yet."

"Do you know what it contained? Did you open it?"

"Well, I guess not. Open that cussed thing? I don't take no chances, judge, these days when you hear so much 'bout explosive-machines. I just let it alone."

"Where is it now?"

"Up to the house," returned Cy.

"Go home and get it. Say, Tom," pointing to the constable, "you go with him and see that the thing don't explode until you get it here; be quick, too."

The two men jumped into a buckboard and quickly drove to the house, a short distance away. They returned with a mud-bespattered, sorry-looking satchel.

The group, although eager to see its contents, stood at a safe distance.

The judge pried open the grip. Mr. Hawkins thrust his hands into the space, withdrew from it a large package, and with a shout of joy exclaimed as he held the bundle high above his head: "The bonds are safe!"

That night Rogers, dressed in a new suit of clothes, left on the nine o'clock train with Mr. Hawkins, whose face was as bright as the noonday sun.

"Rogers," he said, "it was careless of you to leave that grip in the seat; but your carelessness has saved me from being a financial wreck."

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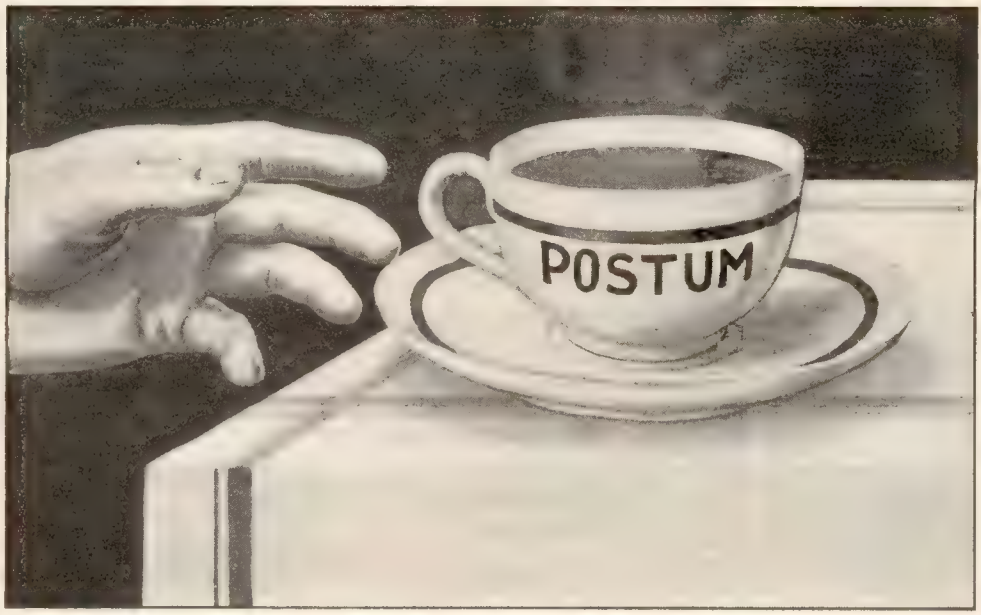


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## *SOME FEATURES IN STAR ISSUE.*

**"WHITE SLAVE TRADE OF TODAY,"** by Edwin W. Sims, United States District Attorney in Chicago. An account of the White Slave traffic of today by the official who has already obtained the conviction of many hundreds of the miserable creatures engaged in this "business," and who, Mr. Sims says, "have reduced the art of ruining young girls to a national and international system." Mr. Sims was the government prosecuting attorney in the famous $29,000,000 Standard Oil case.

**"THE SINS OF SOCIETY,"** by Mr. Joseph Medill Patterson, author of "A Little Brother of the Rich."

**"HOMES AND NEAR HOMES IN THE FAR NORTH,"** by Rex Beach, author of "The Spoilers," "The Barriers," etc.

**"HOW I WON FIRST PRIZE IN A $10,000.00 BEAUTY CONTEST,"** by Miss Della Carson.

**"A POT OF IRISH PORRIDGE,"** by Chauncey Olcott.

**"WHY GIRLS GO ASTRAY,"** by Edwin W. Sims. Mr. Sims states he has received many letters from fathers and mothers, since he began writing for *Woman's World*, whose fears and suspicions "were aroused by the warning that the girl who left her home in the country, gone up to the city and does not come home to visit, needs to be looked up." These cases have been investigated and some of the results are published in his article, "Why Girls Go Astray."

**"WOLVES THAT PREY ON WOMEN,"** by Jane Addams, of Hull House, Chicago.

**"THE STAGE-STRUCK GIRL,"** by Elsie Janis, the youngest star on the American stage.

**"A WORD ABOUT WAYWARD GIRLS,"** by Mrs. Ophelia L. Amigh, Superintendent Illinois State Training School for Girls.

**"THE MOST INTERESTING THING IN THE WORLD,"** a fascinating symposium by George Ade, George Barr McCutcheon, Forrest Crissey, and William Hodge.

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**"BINDING UP THE BROKEN-HEARTED,"** by Maud Ballington Booth, of the Volunteers of America. Interesting facts and experiences of Mrs. Booth's work among men and women in penitentiaries.

**"THE IDENTITY OF MARY,"** by Maud Radford Warren.

**"SHOULD GIRLS BE PERMITTED TO MARRY OLD MEN?"** by Rosetta.

**"THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE FAITH,"** by Mrs. Clara Louise Burnham.

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**"THE BELLE OF THE BARBERS' BALL,"** new song, words and music complete, by Geo. M. Cohan, author of "Yankee Doodle Boy," "So Long, Mary," "Give My Regards to Broadway," etc.

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Edwin W. Sims

Geo. Barr McCutcheon

Rex Beach

Joseph Medill Patterson

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**EDUCATION BY MACHINERY,"** by ROBERT B. ARMSTRONG, former Assistant Secretary of the United States Treasury. **"The Story of a Simple Life,"** by MAUD RADFORD WARREN. Two thrilling boy stories, **"The Phantom Wolf"** and **"From the Neck of the River Thiry,"** by the famous Chicago boy author, DWIGHT MITCHELL WILEY.

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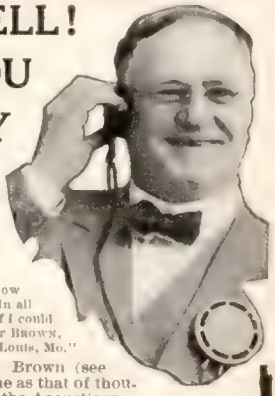

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It is to the ear what glasses are to the eyes—but when worn it can't be seen.

So small you don't know you are wearing it—yet so effective you would miss it instantly.

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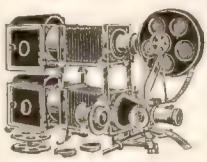

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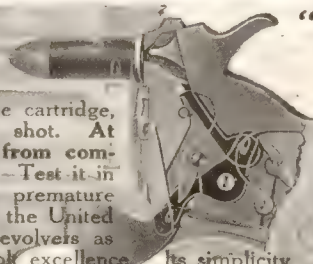

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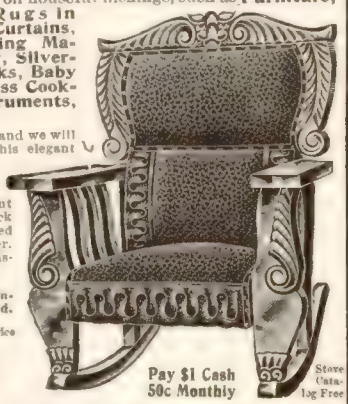

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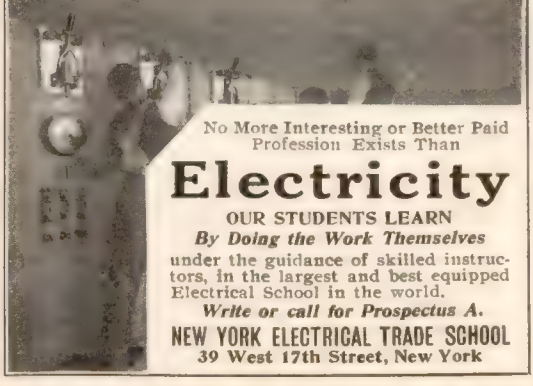

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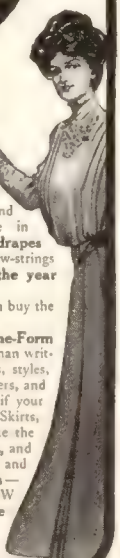

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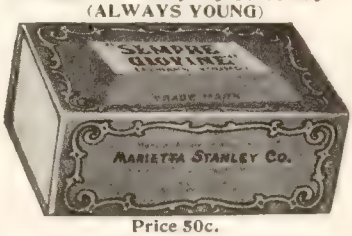


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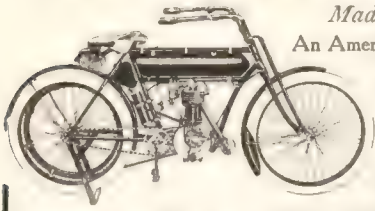

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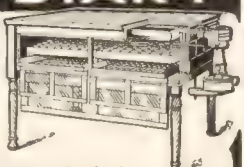

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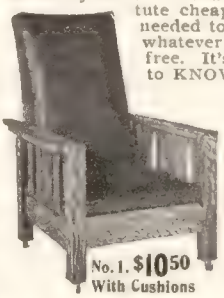

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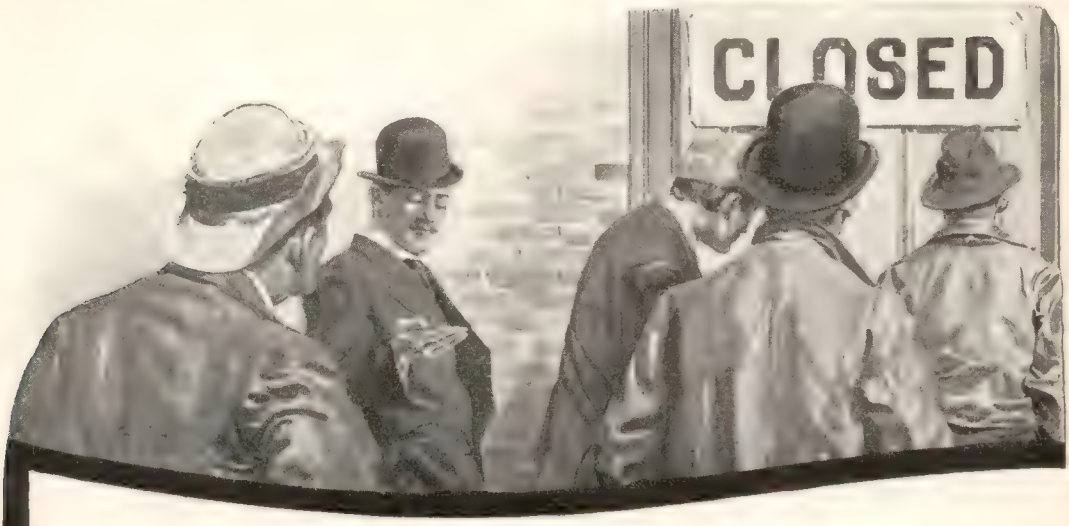


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| Window Trimmer | Plumber & Steam Fitter |
| Commercial Law | Stationary Engineer |
| Illustrator | Civil Engineer |
| Civil Service | Building Contractor |
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never loses its shape, cracks or frays. Indistinguishable from the ordinary collar, as it is **linen, waterproofed.** Stain is removed, and the whiteness of newness restored with a damp cloth. You cut out a daily expense, and are sure of a clean collar, in correct shape all the time. **LITHOLIN Cuffs** are equally serviceable, comfortable and economical. All fashionable shapes, in all sizes.

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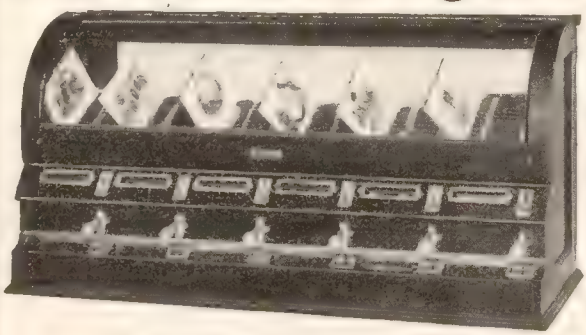

at a profit of $135,000,000, or an average of 1½c. a cigar. You can get a big slice of these profits. You can get a monopoly of the cigar business in your town or county and make a bigger profit on every cigar you sell than any retail storekeeper. With

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**NO MATTER WHAT IT COSTS**, we are determined to push our independent line **even if we should have to fight a combination of all the Watch Manufacturers of the country!**

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Teacher and originator of the Elizabeth King System of Beauty Culture.

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You can start a visiting practice—working by appointment in your patrons' homes, or you can establish a Beauty Parlor in your own home.

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**One Graduate Says:**

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*The course of instruction is worth many times over the price you ask. It repays one a hundredfold if only for their own personal use.*
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*I want to let you know how thankful I am to be earning money through your wonderful system. The lessons are so easy anyone can understand them. I am earning $10 a week and upwards and working only a few hours a day.*
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Don't struggle along in uncongenial employment with long hours and small pay. Educate yourself in this profitable profession and learn to do work that has little competition. Isn't it better to spend a few hours a day for a few weeks and qualify yourself to do work that everyone else cannot do? The field of Beauty Culture is large. You will be surprised when you see what a great demand there is for this work in even the very small places.

***Write to-day for this Free Book—a penny postal will do.***

## ELIZABETH KING SYSTEM

**Dept. H No. 117 E. 23d Street, New York**

### FREE BOOK COUPON. (Cut out and Mail To-day)

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Please send me a copy of your new book, Beauty Culture, which you agree to give absolutely FREE. I am interested in the subject.

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You will refuse all substitutes once you have experienced

**BULL DOG SUSPENDER**

comfort and durability

If they don't contain more rubber, stretch more easily, and give better service and satisfaction, and

**Outwear Three Ordinary Kinds**

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Made in light and heavy weights medium or extra long, as desired, with gold-gilt metal parts, and ends that don't pull out or break

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It is edited solely with that idea in view. It has the widest range of story telling interest of any magazine published in the English language.

**10 Cents a Copy**

**Or by the Year, One Dollar**

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY CO.
175 Fifth Avenue New York

# Riding the Rail from Coast to Coast.

THAT'S what GILSON WILLETS is doing for THE RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE. It is his third annual tour in our behalf, and in the March number we shall set out in pursuit of him. The trip begins with Boston. For the first time we shall take up the railroads centering in the Hub, and tell the tales of romance and adventure, of tragedy that was near-comedy, and comedy that skirted the edge of the tragic, which the railroaders of the New England metropolis told MR. WILLETS.

That will be number one. After that will come stories told by the railroad men of the roads around the Great Lakes, of the yards of St. Paul, the trainmen and enginemen of the Northern Pacific, the railroaders in Butte, the builders of the Pacific extension of the St. Paul, the men who ride the trains and walk the track of the Oregon Short Line, the keepers of the railroad gates by the Great Salt Lake, and so on to the Pacific at Los Angeles. Then we shall swing back to the East over the Southern Pacific, lingering awhile in Texas and Oklahoma to tell the story of the two States that the railroad has made.

This is the third tour and it is also the best. The farther MR. WILLETS goes, the richer becomes the vein of stories opened to him, and the more do the railroad men of the country welcome him and give him their cordial aid in developing the bonanza of anecdote which he is working. So whether you are along his line of march or are forced to watch him from afar, we can only repeat the advice which we have given you before:

# Watch for Willets!

# THE "BEST" LIGHT

The "Best" Light and Lighting System makes and burns its own gas. Operates any number of lights. Lamps from 100 to 2,000 candle power; made in 200 different styles. A beautiful, steady light, brighter than electricity or acetylene, and cheaper than kerosene. ¶ Catalog and estimate of the cost of installing the "Best" System in churches, offices, factories, stores, and residences furnished on request. Write *to-day*. ¶ Agents wanted everywhere.

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DO YOU lose your individuality daily with a "punch" on the time clock? Then you are known by number—not by name.

Have you ever thought of the future—what your reward will be if you continue *year in* and *year out* in the same old rut?

How are *you* going to rise above these conditions? The American School of Correspondence will show you the way.

We have discovered the secret of giving education along the lines of the least resistance—of making study a pleasure instead of drudgery—of giving you just the information you need for your special line of work.

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Argosy—10.

# Blazing the Way for the Telephone

## *The World's Greatest Business Romance*

FROM the stage-coach days of the Bell Telephone to the present—when one calls up from a Pullman attached to the eighteen-hour special in the Union Station at Chicago—is not a very long span of years.

There are women whose youthful beauty has hardly faded who remember the first chronicled tests of the new Bell toy.

Remembering that date—1876—and all the marvelous development since, one fact stands out :

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The steam-boat and railway revolutionized methods of travel. The telephone took the place of nothing previously existing.

First, Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone. His friend, Watson, enthusiastically prophesied that in 1900 there would be 100,000 telephones in use.

There are upwards of 4,000,000 instruments on the Bell lines now.

The first switchboard used by the original Bell Company was made of a piece of plank.

For the whole period of development the Bell system has been building and throwing away switchboards by the millions of dollars' worth—blazing the way for America's wonderful telephone career.

The only company willing to pioneer the field had to invent the switchboard before any practical intercourse was possible.

It had to invent the apparatus leading to and carrying from the switchboard.

Then it had to invent the business uses of the telephone and convince people *that they were uses.* It had no help along this line.

As the uses were created it had to invent multiplied means of satisfying them.

It built up the *telephone habit* in cities like New York and Chicago and then it had to *cope satisfactorily* with the business conditions it had created.

It has from the start *created the need* of the *telephone* and then *supplied it.*

In all this pioneering and inventing, still going on, this company has had to *soundly finance* every undertaking, to keep its securities valuable as a basis of the immense credit necessary to build such a national institution on lines that would prove *universal and lasting.*

People who look upon the universal telephone of to-day as indispensable must look upon the universal telephone of to-morrow as even more so.

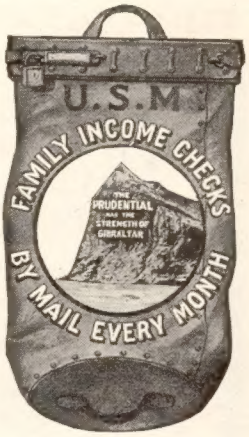
On this plan alone has the building of the universal Bell System been possible.

**American Telephone & Telegraph Company**

## The Very Newest Idea in

# Prudential

## LIFE INSURANCE




### A STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT:

NO other business is so important to the welfare of the family as Life Insurance. The Prudential's object is to provide the most practical form of Life Insurance—that which will contribute most completely to the welfare of those for whose benefit Life Insurance is taken.

With this purpose in mind, The Prudential is issuing a Policy which meets more closely the necessities of those who are left behind when the breadwinner dies than any other form of Life Insurance.

It is called the **Monthly Income Policy,** from the fact that the proceeds, instead of being payable in one sum, are paid to the family in a **Series of monthly checks.** These payments continue for a period of twenty years, or for the lifetime of the beneficiary, if it has been so selected.

Think of being able to leave your wife a Monthly Income,—a guaranteed sum which nothing can disturb—which cannot be lost or stolen—but which will come to her regularly **Every month for twenty years, or for her lifetime.**

The New Monthly Income Policy pays the rent, the household bills, provides food, clothing, education for the children—perpetuates your salary, in fact—all by a monthly income which cannot fail.

**THE COST of this policy is low.** For example, if you should be 30 years old you could, by paying The Prudential $167.35 per year (which means a saving of only $13.95 per month, or about $3.50 per week), assure an income of $50 Every Month for 20 years, or $12,000 in all to your family after your death. At slightly higher cost, you could make this Income payable to your wife or daughter for her entire lifetime. This is called the Whole Life Plan.

You can also arrange to complete all your payments to the Company in the first 20 years after taking out the Policy. This is called the 20 Payment Life Plan.

Now suppose you would like to arrange to **Protect your own old age**—to assure yourself of an Income which would start 20 years from to-day, if you are living then, and last for 20 years longer, or—for you, as long as you live, and your wife as long as she lives, if she survives you. This can be done, too,—under the Endowment Plan.

Suppose you and your wife were both 40 years of age: $214.20 per year (a saving of $4.12 weekly) paid to the Company for 20 years would provide a **Guaranteed Income** of $25 per month, beginning at age 60 and continuing **as long** as **either you or your wife should live,**—and in any event for not less than 20 years.

Every rate and value is absolutely guaranteed, in the policy itself, while back of it are the great resources of The Prudential.

The success already attending this new Monthly Income Policy proves that it is striking the keynote of popular demand. We wish to tell you what The Prudential can do for **You** in this matter. Write now while the subject is fresh in your mind. Address Dept. 98. We will furnish you full information—just adapted to your particular case.

John F. Dryden

**President**

## The Prudential Insurance Company of America

**Incorporated as a Stock Company by the State of New Jersey.**

**HOME OFFICE: NEWARK, N. J.**

# Flexible Wafer-Like Blade

**MAN'S first cutting implement was a piece of flint chipped to a sharp edge.**

Ages later he noticed copper, and, though soft, made his tools of that. Then he found that tin and copper mixed made a harder substance—bronze. The bronze age lasted thousands of years.

Not until what we know as "historic" times did man learn to use iron.

Steel came centuries later.

Man is now perfecting steel.

We are not always aware when history is being made.

The GILLETTE Blade represents a new idea—the first new principle in a razor blade in over four hundred years.

Experts from The Massachusetts Institute of Technology have been working for five years on a finer steel for the GILLETTE Blade. (*Introduced September 1, 1908.*)

This New-Process Blade is the keenest shaving edge ever devised by the skill of man—a new steel, made to special formula. It takes an edge so sharp, a temper so hard and tough that no cutting implement has ever been known to compare with it.

The GILLETTE Blade is wafer-thin, flexible, with a hard, mirror-like finish, and a marvelous durability.

For certain very good reasons it is impossible to make a piece of steel that will take and hold as fine an edge unless it is wafer-thin and flexible.

There is no other blade in the world as thin or as flexible as the GILLETTE—or that will do the work of the GILLETTE.

There is no razor like the GILLETTE: no handle, no blade like it.

It is the one "safety" razor that is safe—cannot cut the face. It is the only razor that can be adjusted for a light or a close shave.

Standard set, $5.00 On sale everywhere.

*Canadian Office*
*63 St. Alexander St.*
*Montreal.*

**GILLETTE SALES CO.**
**210 Kimball Building, Boston**
**Factories: Boston, Montreal, London, Berlin, Paris**

*New York, Times Bldg.*
*Chicago, Stock Exchange Bldg.*

**Gillette Safety Razor**
NO STROPPING NO HONING

Dyed Soaps Hurt!
Soap coloring hides poor material and adulterations which clog your pores and raise havoc with the skin. Fairy Soap is white and pure—it contains only Edible products. There's no bite, no color, no high perfume, no adulteration, no sham in Fairy Soap. With all these virtues, Fairy (the floating, oval cake) sells for 5c.
THE N. K. FAIRBANK COMPANY, CHICAGO
FAIRY
"Have You a Little 'Fairy' in Your Home?"

# Ever-Ready 12 Bladed Safety Razor $1 Complete—

Go to your nearest hardware—cutlery—sporting goods store—druggist or general store, and buy the complete **"EVER-READY" 12 bladed safety razor for $1.00.** Take it home—shave with the **Ever-Ready** and then decide if you would rather have your dollar back or keep the razor.

We **guarantee** that the **"Ever-Ready"** Safety Razor will shave you **best of all** safety razors. Whatever disappointment you have had with higher priced "safeties" you *can't* have with the **"Ever-Ready."** The **Ever-Ready** costs you **$1.00** complete. If you have never experienced the advantages of self-shaving, you can try at our risk.

Over a million **"Ever-Ready"** 12 Bladed Dollar Safety Razors are giving delightfully smooth—clean—keen shaves to their users daily. It removes your beard in a couple of minutes without possibility of cutting or scratching your face.

**No other blade is the same as the "Ever-Ready"**—no other blade is as economical to use and costs as little. No other blade is protected in individual packages like the "Ever-Ready" Blade. Factory perfection till the day you use it—no exposure—no dullness—but clean—keen and sanitary; note the packages on the right—remember the "Ever-Ready face" and the name "Ever-Ready" on each blade—on each box.

**The "Ever-Ready" Safety Razor outfit complete** with **12** (twelve) guaranteed "Ever-Ready" Blades together with "Ever-Ready" frame, which will last a lifetime —nickeled handle and blade stropper, all cased attractively and compactly—**$1.00.**

You can buy **EXTRA "EVER-READY" BLADES** at your dealer's, or he will get them for you—**10 for 50c.** You can strop **"EVER-READY"** blades, or exchange 10 dull ones for 10 new ones upon payment of 35c. See how economical the **"EVER-READY"** is.

Sold by Hardware—Sporting Goods—Cutlery—Department Stores—Jewelers and Druggists throughout America and the World. Ask any local dealer.

*Mail orders prepaid upon receipt of $1.00*

**AMERICAN SAFETY RAZOR COMPANY, INC.**
**320 BROADWAY, NEW YORK**

**Extra Ever-Ready Blades—10 for 50c.**

*Photo Dollar Outfit, Opened.*

THE MUNSEY PRESS, NEW YORK.